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# ABYSSINIA







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TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

<sup>Revised by</sup>  
DR. (HENRY) W. J. <sup>W. J.</sup> THIERSCH,

BY

SARAH M. S. PEREIRA.

"The Abyssinians have been a Christian nation for more than a thousand years. They possess the Holy Scriptures, and are well versed in them. They are free from the ordinary vices of Oriental people. They are a fair and manly race. They have a legitimate claim upon the sympathy of the Christian nations. Although the light of their Church shines but dimly, it still lives, and it has been preserved in spite of numberless invasions by their Mohammedan neighbours, while no other Christian Church came to their help."

—General CHARLES GORDON *to the Editor of the "Times."*

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## A B Y S S I N I A.



To the south of Egypt and Nubia lies the Ethiopian hill-country called Habesh, or Abyssinia. Access to this territory is obtained from two distinct quarters; in the one case, the traveller must start from the coast of the Red Sea; in the other, he must follow the course of the Nile in an upward direction. If he decide upon the first-mentioned route, the little town of Massowa will form his most convenient starting-point; this town is situated upon an island near the coast. In the neighbourhood there are the ruins of the ancient city of Adulis, to which Greek traders were wont in former times to resort. From thence, passing through the district of the savage Shohos, a journey of a few hours' duration conducts him to the foot of the Shumfeito, a

mountain 8000 feet in height. The steep ascent accomplished, the village of Halai, standing upon a plateau 6000 feet above the level of the sea, is reached, and this forms the entrance to Abyssinia proper.

The second route, from Egypt, is more circuitous. Travelling through Assuan (the ancient Syene, situated just within the Tropic of Cancer), the road traverses the Nubian Desert till Berber is reached; and from thence, following the windings of the Nile, the now celebrated Khartoum is gained. It is here that the two great streams, the White and the Blue Nile, form a junction; they might with greater propriety be designated the clear and the turbid river. The White Nile, a stream 900 geographical miles in length, takes its rise southward from the Equator. When the Emperor Nero sent two Roman centurions to discover the mysterious source of the Nile, they returned to him with the tidings that the stream sprang from vast marshes, or lakes, far away in the south; and the modern discoveries of Grant, Speke, and Stanley have corroborated this ancient testimony. The river comes from the three great lakes, Albert Nyanza, Victoria Nyanza, and Lake Alexandra; its

actual source, however, has never been discovered to this day.

It is the Blue Nile which flows from Abyssinia, carrying with it from the mountains of that country the fertilising silt which is washed down from the highlands by the tropical rains that prevail from June to October, to be deposited, together with similar contributions from the Soudan, upon Egyptian soil by the periodical inundations. Herodotus justly described the fertility of the plains of Egypt as a present from the river. The way further leads up the Blue Nile through the district of Sennaar to the frontier town of Metammah, and to the Abyssinian highlands, which on this side are comparatively accessible. All the rivers of Abyssinia empty themselves into the Nile; and none of them, not even the rapid Takazze or Atbara, is navigable. Hence it comes that this mountainous land, shut in on almost every side, is peculiarly suitable for a people which has succeeded for centuries in preserving a position of independence among the neighbouring nationalities.

Abyssinia is divided into three parts. Tigré, with its ancient capital of Axum, now fallen into decay,

and its present capital of Adowa, is the most northern of these. The central part consists of Amhara and Godjam, with the chief town, Gondar, not far from the Zana Lake, the southern frontier crowned by the fortress of Magdala. The southern division comprehends Shoa, with its capital, Ankober, situated on a high mountain. The summits of the Alps of Semen, in the central region of the kingdom, are about equal in height to Mont Blanc. The various table-lands are intersected by mountain-passes, the height of some of which exceeds 10,000 feet. The entire expanse of the country from south to north, from 8° to 15° northern latitude, about represents the distance from the southern extremity of the Tyrol to the coasts of the Baltic.

The outlines of the mountains exhibit incomparably grotesque features. Volcanic eruptions and atmospheric decomposition have combined to produce the most singular formations. Towering pillars of basalt alternate with table-mountains supported by nearly perpendicular walls, and constituting the so-called *Amba*, natural fortifications.

The high situation modifies the heat of the tropical sun, and renders the climate a peculiarly

favourable one, similar to that of Quito. Fostered by these genial conditions, a magnificent world of vegetation flourishes in these regions, which seem to recal the idea of Paradise itself. Nor is any other country in the world so rich in wild and prodigious animals. The elephant, the rhinoceros, and the giraffe, the lion, the hyena, and the leopard, are here indigenous, to say nothing of troops of baboons and other creatures of the monkey-tribe; while the crocodile and the hippopotamus are at home in river and lake.

This mountainous land forms, so to speak, a gigantic fortress. It served, indeed, as a refuge for Eastern Christianity, when the Mohammedan flood overwhelmed the Oriental Churches with such fatal vehemence that only a miserable remnant of the same survived in Africa and Asia. The Abyssinians might well say: "This house of freedom hath God established for us."\* There, in that isolated land, island-like in its independence, cut off from intercourse with western nations and surrounded by Mohammedans and heathens, there was a Christian

\* Words of Tell in Schiller's Tragedy pointing to the Alps of Switzerland.

kingdom founded, which has endured even to this day. It had, however, fallen into oblivion till the Portuguese, in the time of Vasco de Gama, sailing from India, discovered it, and initiated relations between this remote kingdom and the nations of Europe. The complexion of the Abyssinian varies from very dark to light brown. Their physiognomy and craniological development, so far from resembling the west African type, are distinctly Caucasian; they have noble features, and lofty foreheads, indicative of excellent mental capacities. The question therefore arises: whence sprang this people? So early as the days of Homer, reference was made to the fact that the Ethiopians were split into two divisions; the one inhabiting the country to the west, the other dwelling in the territory to the east, of the Arabian Sea.\* Abyssinia was connected with Arabia in primitive days; and this relationship is proved by the language. The vocabulary is at least a third part Arabic, the grammar almost entirely so; the written characters are of Semitic origin. The foreign elements of the lexicon are African, and prove that a mingling of the children of Ham with

\* Odyss. i. 20-22.

those of Shem had here taken place. By virtue of the Arabic element the Abyssinian nation is included among the posterity of Abraham.

Abyssinia presents a remarkable contrast to Egypt. The latter is the land of temples and of images; in Abyssinia, neither statues nor traces of heathen temples are to be met with. Yet it is said that the serpent and the cow were worshipped here, and heathens, namely the Agaw and the Kamauts, still exist within the Abyssinian borders; but these tribes possess no idols, any more than their heathen neighbours, the Galla, in the south. The obelisks in Axum have not yet been explained, nor have their inscriptions been deciphered. In the only Greek inscription there extant, King Aizanes styles himself a son of Mars, but it is not known when this king lived.

The ancient heathenism was repressed by the monotheism of Abraham and of Moses long before the appearance of Christianity. The belief of Abraham in the One True God has never been entirely extinguished among the Arabs; this faith may therefore have been, from the very beginning, indigènous among the Ethiopians, who claim descent



from the same stock. In process of time, these nations came into direct contact with the people of Israel. Who was the Queen of Sheba, who journeyed from the ends of the earth to hear Solomon's wisdom (1 Kings x.)? The Abyssinians claim her as their own; and in truth the ancient kingdom of Meroë, a part of Ethiopia, might very well be understood under the name of Saba. But the Arabs also want to appropriate this queen. They maintain that she ruled over the Sabeans in Arabia Felix. By the Abyssinians she is called Makeda, by the Arabs, Balkis. Both traditions may have some foundation in truth if this kingdom at that epoch compassed both shores of the Red Sea. According to the legend universally believed in Abyssinia, this queen bore unto Solomon a son, named Menelek, who was brought up in Jerusalem; and who, when arrived at man's estate, stole the Ark of the Covenant, and carried it, accompanied by twelve priests and a number of other Israelites, to his native Ethiopia. This story seems to savour of the fabulous; and yet the Prophet Zephaniah (iii. 10) testifies that so early as in his day (625 B.C.) there were scattered Israelites "beyond the rivers of Ethiopia."

When Sennacherib, the mighty king of Assyria, reduced Jerusalem and King Hezekiah to the deepest affliction, "he (Sennacherib) heard say of Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee;" and these tidings caused him to retreat into his own land (2 Kings xix. 7-9). Now what was it that prompted this unexpected ally of the King of Judah to action? The presumption is by no means far-fetched if we suppose community of belief to have been the motive power.

Clear and widely significant is the light thrown upon this subject by the narrative of the eunuch of Ethiopia in the eighth chapter of the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. He was keeper of the treasures to the Ethiopian Queen Candace; and he was making the toilsome journey to Jerusalem in order to worship there, and from this it is to be understood that he was also the bearer of offerings for the Temple of the Lord. This circumstance can only be explained if we take it for granted that he was acting with the approval of his royal mistress. It is a universal law in the East that the slave must adopt the religion of his master; and thus we have sufficient evidence before us that, in the time of the

Apostles, Abyssinia was ruled by a queen who professed the Mosaic faith.

To the west of Gondar dwell the Felashas, or black Jews, to the number of about 200,000 souls, who possess the Old Testament Scriptures in the Ethiopian tongue, and who observe the law of Moses. It is possible that they may be partly descended from Israelites who migrated thither and married Ethiopian women; but they are probably for the most part the posterity of proselytes, that is, of Abyssinians who had accepted the Mosaic religion. They are most likely the remnant of a far more numerous population holding that faith, to which they still adhere, while the bulk of the Abyssinian nation accepted Christianity. Thus we have here presented us a nation to whom Moses became in a peculiar manner a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ (Gal. iii. 24). As we find in the Acts of the Apostles that the proselytes of the gate, the pious heathen, were everywhere the most receptive of the Gospel, so the Ethiopians were in a state of preparation, when the chamberlain of Queen Candace, returning homewards, brought them the first tidings of salvation in Christ. Yet the spread

of Christianity on a large scale did not ensue until the fourth century. At that period, when the Goths of the North became christianised through the instrumentality of the Greek Church, the same thing happened to the Ethiopians of the South, only with the one great difference, that the former received an imperfect Arian Creed, while the latter were instructed in the true and genuine doctrines of the Faith.

Meropios was a Greek philosopher and Christian, who undertook a journey of discovery to the east coast of Africa. He was slain at Adulis by the heathens, and his sons, the youthful Frumentius and *Ædesius*, were sold into Ethiopia for slaves. They were taken to Axum, to the court of the Queen-dowager, who was then regent during the minority of her son. The youths earned the confidence of the queen; *Ædesius* became her household steward, Frumentius the tutor of the prince. On the latter attaining full age, the young strangers received permission to return to their home. *Ædesius* became a presbyter of the Church of Tyre, whilst Frumentius sought out St. Athanasius at Alexandria, and informed him of the willingness of the Ethiopians

to receive the Christian Faith. Athanasius consecrated him a bishop, and sent him (330 A.D.) with nine other Christian teachers to Abyssinia, where he succeeded, with the help of the king, in peaceably introducing the Christian religion. The preaching of the Gospel was confirmed by numerous healings of the sick. A great work was then accomplished, concerning which we possess only scanty data; but its fair results are clearly to be seen. This introduction of the Faith into Abyssinia is analogous to the evangelisation of Alemannia, of which also but few details have come down to us. The whole nation was instructed and baptized, and the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Covenants were translated in full into the Ethiopian language. In no country in the world are so many churches to be found as in Abyssinia; countless eminences are crowned, each one with its sacred edifice, usually of circular form with conical roof upborne by a colonnade of wooden pillars, and generally surrounded by a hedge of cedars.

The Abyssinian Church remained united with that of Alexandria. It has only one bishop for the entire land, and when this dignitary dies, his suc-

cessor must be consecrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria, and he is always brought from Egypt. This bishop, the Abuna, the father-general of the Abyssinians, then ordains all the priests and deacons for the whole country. By means of this arrangement, the unbroken connection with the Egyptian Church and community of faith have been secured.

In consequence of this close union, the daughter-Church shared, in the succeeding centuries, the fate of the mother-Church. As the one, so the other, was simultaneously severed from the Orthodox Greek Church, for the Abyssinians as well as the Copts are, as is well known, Monophysites. The Fourth General Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) had, with intent to adjust the Nestorian and Eutychian disputes, decreed in its Confession of Faith that we acknowledge in the One Christ, whom we worship, the dual Nature, the Human and the Divine, and that these two Natures are not to be divided, though they are to be distinguished. This doctrine of the two Natures became the stumbling-block; for the Ethiopian tongue is less rich than the Greek, and is incapable of expressing the subtle distinction

between *Person* and *Nature*. If anyone speak of the two Natures in Christ, he has the appearance of teaching that there are two Persons, and so seems to promulgate the pernicious heresy which seeks to divide the One Christ. It is evident that the Greek teachers of those days were wanting in that wisdom whereby an understanding with the Christians of Egypt and Ethiopia might have been arrived at. In the following century Justinian wanted to force a union; but his measures only served to render the schism complete. The Egyptian Christians declared themselves independent of the Byzantine State-Church, and chose a Patriarch of their own; the Abyssinian Christians made common cause with them. In the present day it is the Coptic Patriarch, residing at Cairo, who selects and consecrates the Abuna for Abyssinia. The isolation became total and entire after Egypt came under the dominion of the Caliph Omar; and when, after the lapse of centuries, the forgotten Church of Abyssinia came once more to light, it was found that she had remained at precisely the same ancient stand-point both in doctrine and in usages.

The universal characteristic of the East is con-

stancy, and unchanging adherence to old customs and traditions. But nowhere are these peculiarities so sharply and deeply impressed as they are upon the Abyssinian Church. Whilst in our Western lands a continual movement of mind and spirit is taking place, and in consequence, incessant progress both in good or evil, in the East everything remains stationary and as of old. Egyptian art remained at the same level for thousands of years : from the days of the Pharaohs to the time of the Roman dominion, the old accustomed forms were strictly preserved, and reproduced without variation. In Arabia the same manners and customs are to be observed in the nineteenth century as in the days of Abraham. In like manner does the Abyssinian Church of to-day present the same outward form as that which it had assumed in the times of Theodosius II. and of the Council of Chalcedon. She has weathered the storms that have passed over her in the interval with a steadfastness of patience worthy of our liveliest admiration.

About the year 900 of the Christian era, the Jews had waxed so powerful that their princess, the doughty Judith, overwhelmed the Christian kingdom,



and a new dynasty, that of the Zagaz, came into power. Even as Athalia once nearly exterminated the seed of David, so did Judith cause the members of the royal Solomon-descended family to be massacred. But like as Joash was preserved alive, it came to pass also in Abyssinia that one scion of the kingly house escaped. He found a refuge in Shoa; and it was from there that, in 1268, Thekla Haimanot, the celebrated Saint of Abyssinia, restored the Christian kingdom, and maintained the rights of the Solomon-dynasty to the Abyssinian throne.

Eastwards from Shoa, in the sultry, low-lying Adal-land to the coast-town of Tadjurra, fanatical Mohammedan Arabs make their home. Their prince, Granje, invaded Shoa in 1530, and from thence overwhelmed the whole of Abyssinia with the most horrible devastation; whereupon the Portuguese hastened from their Indian possession of Goa to the assistance of the oppressed Abyssinians. Christovão de Gama, nephew of the great Vasco de Gama, landed with 400 heavily-armed soldiers, and fought the Mohammedans. He was betrayed into the hands of Granje, and murdered by him;

but the latter was himself slain in battle not long afterwards, and the Portuguese and Abyssinians remained masters of the field. A friendly alliance was formed between the Abyssinians and Portugal, and the buildings erected by the Portuguese still remain as memorials of those days; one of these is the romantic but now ruined palace at Gondar, called Gemp, the other is the Cathedral Church at Axum. Descendants of those Portuguese auxiliaries are still to be found in that land; but they have become thorough Abyssinians.

A third storm, which swept over the land at no long interval, was due to the Jesuits. Ignatius Loyola sent the first host of missionaries, who were charged to bring the Abyssinian Church under the dominion of the Pope. A second host was despatched by Philip II., in the year of the dispersion of the Spanish Armada (1588). The then Abyssinian King Claudius, a great and wise ruler, tolerated the Roman Catholic worship, but at the same time drew up a Confession of Faith, wherein he defended the Abyssinian doctrines and rites against the strangers. His successor, Susneus, yielded, however, and received with submission, as

Patriarch of the land, the Spaniard Mendez, sent by the Pope. These patres might have benefited the poor Abyssinians by the spread of European learning and Christian civilization. But, as in India they had succeeded in abolishing ancient traditions among the St. Thomas-Christians, so now in Abyssinia did they exact entire conformity to the Romish Church. The king consented to this; and, beguiled by the intruders, proclaimed sentence of death to all who failed to submit to his decree. The Abuna replied by pronouncing the anathema; the people rose up against the new-comers, and civil war broke out. Susneus certainly proved victorious in battle, over the peasantry of the province of Lasta, who had taken arms against him; but then, smitten by his conscience, he gave way, and consented to the restoration of the ancient Alexandrian form of worship. His successor, Basilides, banished in 1632 both the Patriarch and the Jesuits, who had proved themselves Esauites, and had left behind them a sorry reputation.

When, in 1760, Bruce, and in 1820 Salt, visited Abyssinia, and since then, from 1829, Evangelical missionaries arrived from time to time in the land,

they all found the Abyssinian Church existing in all her antiquity, like some venerable tree with many withered branches, yet not perishing, but still sending out green shoots; a magnificent ruin, dreary to look upon, yet capable of restoration.

Let us now endeavour to give a sketch of Abyssinian Christianity.

In the interior of the land lies the sacerdotal city of Lalibala. It took this name in the thirteenth century from a great king who is numbered among the saints. It is situated in one of the most beautiful districts, 7000 feet above the level of the sea. There stand the churches which Lalibala caused to be hewn whole out of the rock; buildings (monoliths) which remind one of the Egyptian sphinx, and the rock-temples of Ellora and Elephanta. They do not resemble the ordinary Abyssinian churches, round structures with conic roofs, but are more like basilicas in the primitive Christian style, with pillars in the interior and a sparing allowance of light. These marvellous works, of sculpture not of architecture, are a type of Abyssinian Christianity itself. Firm, as if rock-hewn, stand the primitive formularies of the Church, yet

scantily dowered with light. The Evangelical missionary, who seeks after signs of fresh-springing spiritual life, finds but little satisfaction in Abyssinia. But the friend and votary of history beholds with admiration antiquity towering up into the present. If we visit the Church of San Clemente at Rome, or "St. Paul without the walls," we can dream ourselves back into the time of Constantine and Theodosius. Similar impressions are produced in Abyssinia. If the Greek Church in the Turkish Empire seems ancient, the Ethiopic Church, which branched off from the Greek Communion so early as 451, seems still more so.

The singular combination of primitive Orthodoxy and Mosaic customs is especially worthy of remark. The Faith is the same as that declared by the first three General Councils. The Most Holy Trinity and the Divinity of Christ are deeply and indelibly impressed upon the Christians of this land, so that no Abyssinian could dare to harbour the slightest doubt as to these doctrines. Their most important book, next to the Bible, is a collection of the sermons of SS. Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, and Cyril of Alexandria. That certain usages and rites

of the Old Covenant co-exist with this pure Christian teaching, may be explained by the circumstance that the Apostles and their immediate successors did not require the renunciation of Mosaic practices on the part of the Jewish Christians and strict converts who had always been accustomed to them. The Gospel came through St. Mark, the disciple of St. Peter, to Alexandria, and from Alexandria it was carried to Ethiopia. It can therefore be no matter for surprise if the ecclesiastical order in these regions remind one of the ministry of St. Peter more than of that of St. Paul. In the province of Godjam the Sabbath is kept holy as well as the Sunday; on these two days of the week labourers are excused from field-work. So it is ordained in the ancient Canons, and thus it is observed in Egypt also. But Sunday is the Lord's Day proper, of which it is said: "This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it." On this day in each week a celebration of the Holy Communion takes place.

Fasts are kept every Wednesday and Friday; Wednesday commemorates the betrayal, Friday the sufferings of our Lord. This was the custom of the

Christians in the most primitive days, as we learn from the so-called "Teaching of the Apostles," the earliest of all codes of Church-order. In Abyssinia these fasts are observed by tasting nothing until three o'clock in the afternoon, precisely as it is laid down in the writings of Tertullian.

The new-born male infant receives on the eighth day the rite of circumcision, on the fortieth day, that of Holy Baptism; while girls do not receive the latter rite until eighty days after birth. The mother, in accordance with the Mosaic ordinance, is bound to present herself in the sanctuary, forty days after the birth of a son, or eighty after that of a daughter. Circumcision is retained as an ancient custom, although the Abyssinians are well aware that it is not necessary to salvation. Every baptized person wears round the neck a blue silk cord, *Mateb*, to distinguish him as a Christian from the Jews and Mohammedans.

Baptism is performed with the utmost solemnity, by means of a plentiful pouring on of water. If the person to be baptized be an adult, he first turns to the west to pronounce the renunciation, then to the east, facing the sanctuary, to repeat the Nicene

Creed. After baptism he receives the white robe, and milk and honey are placed in his mouth. He enters the House of God, says the Lord's Prayer, and partakes of the Holy Communion.

The elements of the Lord's Supper consist, as in the Greek Church, of ordinary bread, and of the unfermented juice of the grape, instead of wine. The prayers for this office are solemn and sublime, but unfortunately they are, in common with the rest of the liturgy, unintelligible to the people, who have forgotten the ancient Ethiopic tongue. According to primitive custom, and also to present use among Greek Christians, the churches are devoid of seats, or of kneelers. The congregation are obliged to stand throughout the whole service, though the feeble and infirm are allowed to support themselves on a crutched staff. Only the priests and deacons are suffered to tread the inner sanctuary. On the altar lies the wooden slab, called the *Tabot*, which is consecrated, for use in the holy Eucharist. The priests bear the *Tabot* with them when they accompany the King in his campaigns, even as the Israelites of old carried the Ark of the Covenant to the battlefield.



The Abuna, or Patriarch, anoints the King and ordains the priests. As in the Greek Church, married men are selected for the priesthood; after the death of the wife, they are forbidden to re-marry. Side by side with the priesthood there exists the class of the *Debtera*, or learned men, answering to the scribes of Israel; their lore is almost exclusively confined to theology. For the diaconate it is usual to dedicate young boys, whom the Abuna ordains by breathing upon them.

The Abyssinians have all the Christian festivals to be found in our calendar, but they add to these four monthly-recurring feast-days, which recall the Jewish feasts of the new moon. If we count the anniversaries of the Saints, there sometimes occur eighteen holy-days in one and the same month. The Feast of the Epiphany commemorates the baptism of Christ. As it is the custom at this season for pilgrims to bathe themselves in the Jordan, so in Abyssinia there takes place a similar custom, under the direction of the priests, not without concomitant abuses. This is not intended as a reiteration of baptism; it is merely done in memory of the baptism of Our Lord.

In no other country are the fasts so long and so strict. Fifty, not forty, days of abstinence are observed before Easter, besides the Advent fast, and one in August in honour of the Virgin Mary. In addition to these, there is a fast in memory of the Apostles, and another commemorative of the repentance of Nineveh.

It is customary to pray for those who have fallen asleep in Christ. This is done in the sense of the primitive Church; that is to say, the people pray for the "perfect consummation and bliss" of the departed at the resurrection of the just. The doctrine of purgatory does not exist in Abyssinia. Absolution is pronounced over the dead. The funeral-meal, called the *taskar*, is, among this nation, as among the ancient Germans, sadly provocative of intemperance.

Traces still remain of the strict discipline of the primitive Church. Whosoever has fallen into gross sin is obliged, now as then, to make public confession of his fault. The penitent is condemned to severe fasting.

Concerning unclean animals, they follow the Mosaic Law, as laid down in the tenth chapter of

Leviticus. They are forbidden to eat the flesh of swine, of hares, &c. Agreeably to the decision of the Apostles, Acts xv., they are ordered to abstain from eating blood; they slaughter their cattle after the manner of the Jews, so that all the blood is poured upon the ground. It is probably for this reason that no Christian may partake of meat which has been killed by Mohammedans.

As the Abyssinians received Christianity from Egypt, they at the same time received, with Bible and Gospel, precepts of strict asceticism. The fourth and fifth centuries were, in Egypt and Palestine, the era of anchorites, or hermits. Monachism developed, and was recommended by St. Athanasius. It was transplanted into Ethiopia, and flourishes there still, in all its pristine form. SS. Antonius, Pachomius, and Macarius in Egypt, and Hilarion in Palestine, were the founders of this mode of life.

The national character of the ancient Egyptians, as exemplified in their temples and rock-hewn graves, was gloomy. The wilderness on each side of the narrow valley of the Nile is a horrible plain of death, and the mood of the ancient race corresponded with such impressions. If a rose be

grafted upon an oak, the flower is nourished by the sap of the tree, and contracts its sombre tints ; and thus it came to pass when the rose of Christian belief was grafted into the ancient Egyptian stock. The days of persecution and martyrdom had passed away, and those who had sorrowfully experienced the nothingness of the world, and were yearning for eternal and heavenly treasures, now sought a votuntary martyrdom in solitude and privations, in order that they so might follow their suffering Redeemer, and attain to Christian perfection.

Penitents of this class rallied round St. Anthony, and, taking up their abode in little huts, formed a hermits' colony, or *laura*. They exercised themselves in prayer, in manual labour, and in mortification, and only met for common worship. They received their rules of life from their abbot. From the pious sayings of those fathers of the desert, evangelical Christians also may derive edification. In other Eastern lands that form of Monachism has almost disappeared ; whoever desires therefore to have a personal knowledge of it, must go to Abyssinia. The Rule of St. Anthony prevails there, to the exclusion of all others.

The monks, and also the nuns, do not live in monastic buildings, but in huts grouped round a church. They wear, in contradistinction to secular persons, a cross and a peculiar head-covering. Some live in towns, others in complete retirement. Many aged people, widowed folk, and world-weary take the monastic vows. The common head of all the monks is the Etchegue at Gondar; he is the King's Confessor, and, during any vacancy of the Episcopal chair, the supreme head of the Abyssinian Church. The restorer of monastic life after a period of decadence was the already-mentioned Thekla Haimanot, who founded the cloister of Debra Libanos in Shoa.

The ascetic mood is so widely prevalent and influential in Abyssinia, that it has communicated itself to the Jews, and called forth a phenomenon, unique of its kind, a Jewish order of monks among the Felashas. This institution may to a certain extent be compared to the Therapeutæ of Egypt, described by Philo. With these two exceptions, Monachism finds no representative in Jewish circles.

The strictest renunciation of the world is practised by the recluses. Abyssinia is rich in caves. Ascetics have been known to retire to such places

with the resolution never again to look upon the light of the sun. Such voluntary prisoners are supplied with food by their fellow-monks, until death releases them from their self-imposed penance. In the ritual-books of the Coptic Christians is to be found a prescribed form of consecration to be used on behalf of a penitent of this class on his taking the vows previous to his retirement to the cave.

Those singular mountain-formations, called *Amba*, are admirably suited to serve as state-prisons, and also for the establishment of monastic colonies of strict observance. Such an *Amba* is Debra Damot in Tigré, with which we were made acquainted through Samuel Gobat's description. He fled thither with his pupils at the time of the civil wars. Debra Damot is an inaccessible rock. Visitors to it are drawn up and let down by means of a rope and basket. Legend tells us that one of the nine holy men sent by St. Athanasius into Ethiopia, had singled out this rock for the establishment thereon of a *laura*. But—how was he to reach it? He beheld a monstrous serpent crawling up. Seizing the reptile's tail, he safely

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reached the elevated surface. Hence this saint bears the surname of *Aragawi*, or the Climber.

Upon this plateau are forty huts, each one inhabited by three monks. One lives exclusively for contemplation, the second has to provide the means of subsistence, while the third is the servant of the two others. In case of the death of one of the elder ones, the next in standing takes his place. They have water and cultivated fields up there, so that they can hold themselves independent of the rest of the world. They boast that no female being, not even a hen, has ever intruded upon their lofty retreat, just as the Greek monks boast of their sacred Mount Athos.

While Gobat was staying as a guest at Debra Damot, he found a cave in which was concealed a recluse, who could be conversed with yet without being seen. That man was filled with a moody, awe-inspiring earnestness, yet his conversation betrayed his spiritual pride. Perceiving this, Gobat thus addressed him: "As long as you think so highly of yourself and so lightly esteem your brethren, all your works will be worthless and sinful in the sight of God." Never before had

any one so spoken to the old man. He wept, and remained in his cave.

In Abyssinia great sins are to be found beside deep repentance. And what is this other than the characteristic of the Middle Ages, which still continues here unchanged by time? For in mediæval days ferocity and crime often broke out amongst us, to be followed by deep repentance, in which a whole nation took part. It is consistent with this characteristic, that the Abyssinians often make violent war upon each other, but are quickly reconciled, and become the best friends again.

That gloomy disposition manifests itself in other ways. There grows in Abyssinia a certain tree, the top of which is often broken away by storms; the trunk remains standing, and resembles a hollow pillar. According to Bishop Gobat's statement, it has happened that a penitent, who has some heavy guilt to bewail, has stepped into this trunk never to issue from it again. His relatives brought him food till the tree grew together again, and the imprisoned man was starved to death.

The Abyssinians are cruel in warfare, but not so in peace; yet very severe punishments are some-



times inflicted in the process of education. If a child has told a lie or been guilty of theft, parents have been known to brand his lips or hands with a red-hot coal.

Side by side with the ascetic humour to which reference has just been made, and partly in connection with it, is displayed a many-sided superstitious tendency, especially illustrated by their exaggerated veneration of saints, and by their numerous legends. Invocation of the Mother of God is resorted to on all occasions, although they do not go so far as the Romanists in their Mariolatry. Yet their confidence in God and in their Redeemer is impaired by such self-chosen devotion.

It may happen that a person is adjured by the Name of God to perform some act of friendship; he will very likely fail to fulfil his promise. But should he be adjured by the name of a saint, he is sure to make good his word, because he fears the anger of the saint.

Protestant missionaries have upon the whole made but little way, on account of their occasional utterances concerning the Most Blessed Virgin Mary. They are bound to protest against the excessive

worship paid to Mary; but it is to be feared that in some cases they have gone too far towards the other extreme, and rendered too little honour to the memory of her who was at once the most exalted and the most lowly among women, whom all generations shall call blessed. They have been stigmatised in Abyssinia with the name of Mary-haters.

The Abyssinians, like the Greek Christians of Asia Minor, preserve ancient traditions relating to apparitions of the Archangel Michael, to whom, next to the Virgin Mary, they pay the highest devotion. When Samuel Gobat's preaching, his godly life, and the recovery of sick persons for whom he had prayed, made a deep impression upon many, some few began to imagine that the stranger might be a manifestation of the Archangel.

They possess a collection of legends, numbers of which Luther would justly have denominated lies (LUEGENDEN). This collection corresponds to the Greek *Synaxarion*, and to the Latin *flos sanctorum*. Such fruits of a diseased fancy have a bad influence upon religious life; but as psychological phænomena they are remarkable. For example, St. Eustathios sailed upon his tunic over rivers, and literally

removed mountains through faith. Another saint fought for six miles with the devil, who had taken the form of a serpent, and then cast him down from a mountain. Yet another saint converted Satan, so that he became a monk, and did penance for forty years for his forty days' temptation of Christ. What eventually became of him is not recorded. Another holy personage wished for a roasted partridge, and one straightway flew down upon his plate fresh from the spit. Again, we hear of another of the saintly band who had never eaten or drunk from the hour of his birth, who read Masses every day at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and flew every night, in the form of a stork, to Abyssinia and back.\*

In harmony with the Greek Church, the Christians of Abyssinia prohibit the erection of statues in the churches, but they allow pictures in their fanes. A picture of a saint must not cast a shadow, for then it would become an idol. Their paintings, chiefly on parchment, are, as might be expected, very imperfect in execution, and are often of a legendary character. St. George is represented in

\* Vide Bruce's Travels to discover the Sources of the Nile.

conflict with the Dragon, St. Demetrius fighting with the lion. The devil, and wicked men, are portrayed in profile, the saints in full face. The Abyssinians do not go so far in their veneration of pictures as do the Greeks and Romanists.

To the realm of superstition further belongs the use of amulets in all cases of sickness; there also prevails a great dread of magicians, male and female. The Felashas have the reputation of sorcerers, who change themselves into hyenas.

Connected with these fabulous legends and superstitious fancies is a great danger; one similar to that which is also to be observed in all exclusively Roman Catholic countries. It is this: so soon as the people have seen through such deceptions, they are tempted to doubt everything that the priests say, and to despise even the Bible. Superstition is one of the parents of unbelief. A tree which is overgrown with parasitical plants withers and dies. The same effect, in a spiritual sense, is produced when good Christian institutions, such as are to be found in Abyssinia, are smothered beneath a rank growth of superstitious imaginings and usages. The sanctifying operation of the truth and of the sacraments is

injured, and spiritual life is choked. Evils and dangers such as these can only be remedied by the establishment of Biblical Christianity and a scriptural reformation of the Church. To bring about a movement of this kind was the endeavour of the Evangelical missionaries; but as yet we grieve to say that the effort has remained without success. The fair hopes excited, fifty years ago, by Gobat's efficient labours have not been justified by the event.

Whilst Abyssinia is the most ecclesiastical of all countries, its moral condition by no means answers to its Christian standard of doctrines; and we cannot feel surprised at this state of things, when we take into consideration the divers unfavourable circumstances which work together in an adverse direction.

The most conspicuous of these disadvantages is ignorance. The Bible, up to our day, was only to be had in the Ethiopic tongue. The people were indebted to Gobat for the first translations into Amharic, the vernacular of the people; these consisted of versions of the Gospels, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, and the epistle to the Romans. There were no schools for the people, nor have any

such been established as yet. The sons of the men of distinction could learn to read Ethiopic in the monasteries, but without understanding the language. Even of the priests nothing more was required than that they should be able to read the Ethiopic Bible and Liturgy.

Their utter dissociation from civilised peoples is one of the chief causes of the backward condition of the Ethiopians. The Alexandrian mother-Church could be of but little service to them, since it was doomed to languish under the yoke of the Arabs, Turks, and Mamelukes.

The dismemberment of the kingdom, and the almost perpetual civil wars during the last century, have finally contributed another powerful influence to hinder the development and progress of the country. In such times of trouble and alarm men degenerate into something akin to savages. This fact was sadly exemplified in Germany, by the annals of the Thirty Years' War. The representatives of law and justice then become powerless to punish crime. Public opinion is no longer mighty enough to protect good morals. The influence of the clergy, which might otherwise be exercised with

beneficial effect, is lamed and disabled. The law grows dumb amid the din of arms. If we consider what the Abyssinians have suffered as a nation, we must wonder, not at their low position among the nations of the earth, but rather that such susceptibility for what is good should still survive in such unstinted measure.

The coarseness of the mode of living far surpasses all our western ideas. Let us imagine a country as vast as was the old German Empire, and destitute to this day of a single road, or of a waggon of any kind. In all matters relating to the arts of domestic life, the Egyptians of the remotest ages were far in advance of the Abyssinians of the present day. They are a people who have but few wants; and they therefore live on, devoid of energy, indolent and dreamy. They sleep upon cow-hides, eat without knife or fork, live in indescribable squalor, and devour raw meat. Some among them esteem as a delicacy the half-digested cud to be found in the stomach of an ox. They dress their bristling hair with butter, by way of pomade.

Their clothing is scanty, but decent. Notwithstanding many other faults, Gobat was nevertheless

able to affirm that he met with fewer cases of public scandal in Abyssinia than in Cairo, London, or Paris.

The holy estate of matrimony rests on an unsatisfactory basis. It is true that the Church continually witnesses for Christian marriage; and the principle is firmly maintained that a union which has been further solemnised by reception of the Holy Communion on the part of the contracting persons, is indissoluble. But the authorities do not concern themselves about the matter. A man who is married to two or three wives is certainly excluded from Communion; but no objection to polygamy is ever raised by the civil powers. Divorce is easily obtainable from the secular judge; a fatal evil, which is now gaining ground in our own lands of the West.

The Mohammedans are slave-hunters and slave-dealers. The Christians of Abyssinia know that this is sinful; and although they purchase slaves, they do not sell them, and they treat their bond-servants with humanity.

They are in the highest degree hospitable to strangers, and benevolent towards the poor. Werner



Munzinger, our contemporary, bears the following testimony to the Abyssinians, whom he has learnt to know thoroughly: "Even there you will find compassionate hearts; even there are to be found chivalrous protectors of women and of the helpless. The wronged will find an advocate. There you may also win friends who will shelter you in the day of peril. Faithful love, happy spouses, are not rare, and how often will the sorrowing wife voluntarily follow her lord to a premature death! In times of famine you may see women with hollow cheeks, while their children are plump and merry; for they have bestowed their last piece of bread upon their dear ones. With untiring devotion will the wife watch beside her sick husband; worthy sons will sacrifice the fruits of years of toil in order to render the latter days of an aged father free from sordid cares. There is no lack of feeling, nor of mirth and high spirits. They will sing and dance the live-long starry night. Rhapsodies are composed in praise of the hero, the lion-slayer."

The Abyssinians are capable of the noblest self-sacrifice. A French naturalist, Dillon, wished, for scientific purposes, to descend into a plague-infected

valley. His Abyssinian attendants vainly warned him against so fatal an imprudence, but he insisted upon carrying out his design. They would not forsake the master who had chosen them for his service. Every one of his five followers died with him.

Gobat, while sojourning on Mount Damot, made the acquaintance of a monk, whom he felt constrained to love and respect on account of his faithfulness to so much of the truth as he had learned, and his kindness to everybody. This monk related to the missionary the following fact :—

“I was in easy circumstances at Axum, enjoying a most happy life with my faithful wife, when, a few years ago, I became very ill. I was considered to be dying; but my wife said to me, ‘I cannot see you die before my eyes; I will die for you.’ So saying, she took a chicken, walked three times round my bed, and killed the bird in my presence. She fell ill that same day, and the next day she died, and I began to recover. I vowed that I would never look at another woman.”

“I have myself,” continues Gobat, “witnessed a similar case, except that it was a healthy young

man devoting himself for his apparently dying master; and instead of killing a chicken, he broke an egg, and died two days later, while his master got well. The young man was my servant, and he did it for my unworthy self. How to explain such facts I know not; but they prove at least that Abyssinians are capable of devotion and self-sacrifice." \*

Nearly two hundred years ago a celebrated Oriental scholar, Job Ludolf of Gotha, introduced the knowledge of the Ethiopian tongue and of the Abyssinian Church into Western lands, and pointed out to princes and peoples the duty devolving upon them with regard to this far-off Christian nation, and the debt of brotherly love owed by them to the noblest of the races inhabiting the vast African Continent. But it was not until our own day that Evangelical missionaries, Gobat, Isenberg, and Krapf to wit, rose up and went to the assistance of our brethren in Abyssinia. But their hopes were baffled. Gobat was laid prostrate by dangerous illness, and the two others, who were to conduct, for self-interest, were affected, 1884.

\* Life of Samuel Gobat. London: Messrs. Nisbet & Co. p. 150.

the Mission in Tigré, were expelled by Prince Oubea, who was more favourably inclined towards the Jesuits. The hour of Abyssinia was not yet come, and even during the last generation, though at one time a brighter hope seemed dawning, matters have recently taken a critical and tragic turn.

Let us now advert to the political history of the kingdom of Abyssinia.

The ancient royal family, claiming descent from Solomon, displayed in their coat of arms the Lion, with the proud motto derived from the Apocalypse: "The Lion of the tribe of Juda hath prevailed." Bruce, during his travels there from 1768 to 1773, found the kingdom still united and powerful; its ruler could with justice assume the title of "King of kings." But from the year 1780 may be dated the period of decadence and of dissolution.

The chief cause of this decline lay in the despotic form of government common alike to Abyssinia and to all other African kingdoms. The monarch still exercises in the present day the same unlimited power as that possessed by Nebuchadnezzar and other Oriental despots in the days of old. It is true that some restraint has been imposed by

Christianity, and by the existence of a Christian Church within the sovereign's dominions; but the principle is nevertheless firmly maintained, that the king, in virtue of his office, possesses by Divine right such absolute power over his subjects as once was wielded in Byzantium, or by the Czar of Russia. The king's will is law: and he is exalted above the civil code of legislation. The lives and property of his subjects are at his disposal; and he is in fact accounted the sole landed proprietor of the realm,—the entire territory belongs to him. The government is an essentially personal one. As, however, it is impossible for the ruler of a great kingdom to concern himself with every detail of its affairs, the appointment of viceroys becomes a necessity. The duty of these functionaries consists in levying taxes, and in furnishing the required contingents of fighting men. They exercise in their turn despotic authority over the provinces subject to their sway; and this regulation of the governing power has resulted in its natural consequences. As in the case of the princes of the old German Empire, these lieutenants of royalty soon began to arrogate to themselves as a right the lordship delegated to

them by their sovereign; they gradually assumed the status of kings in their own right, and eventually destroyed the unity of the realm. In course of time they became independent rulers, and made war upon each other at will, totally ignoring their common chief and king. There was a repetition of the history of the *maire du palais*, who rose up against the Merovingian monarch. Matters finally arrived at so critical a condition that some powerful chieftain or Ras without ceremony deposed one king, and set up another member of the royal family in his place. The succession remained, however, nominally unbroken; and a shadow of royal dignity still lingered among the pretended descendants of Solomon.

When Gobat arrived at Gondar in 1829, he found the old, legitimate emperor shorn of his power and living in indigence upon a yearly pension of three hundred dollars, while the viceroys of the different provinces did what seemed good in their own eyes. The country was at that time suffering under the wars between Oubea and Sabagadis. The latter, one of the best princes that Abyssinia has ever possessed, and one open to the influences of

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Evangelical teaching, was conquered, and murdered by order of his captor, the vindictive Oubea. The disorders to which Abyssinia became a prey during the following twenty years are but little known, for no one has taken the trouble to chronicle their history. The interregnum, during which there was no emperor, lasted until the advent of Theodore. Under these circumstances, the southern province of Shoa, ruled over by another prince of the house of Solomon, Sahela Selassie, became completely independent and entirely separated from the rest of the Abyssinian dominions. A hostile Mohammedan tribe, that of the Wollo-Galla, had established itself between Shoa and Amhara, and the conquest of these intruders proved a difficult task for the Abyssinian princes.

Shoa, like the province of Semen, is very mountainous, and shut out from the rest of the world. It possesses, moreover, neither harbour nor navigable river. The Habash, which rises there and flows eastwards, does not reach the sea, but loses itself in the desert. In order to arrive at this inland province, the traveller must land in Tadjurra, a Mohammedan stronghold, and one of the headquarters of the slave-

trade presided over by an Arab Sultan. From thence the road leads into the interior, through the insufferably hot low-lying land held by the Mohammedan tribes of Adal and Danakil, wild hordes addicted to plunder and cruelty. Passing onward, the explorer skirts the singular Lake Assal, which resembles the Dead Sea; it lies below the sea-level, and its shores are thickly encrusted with salt. It is from this lake that the lumps of salt are obtained which pass current in Abyssinia for money. At length the high land is reached; a wooded district with a favourable climate and magnificent views. No stranger is allowed to enter Shoa without special permission from the king. The royal leave obtained, however, the stranger at once becomes the monarch's guest; he is maintained by him free of cost throughout the whole time of his stay, and, on departing, is presented with a mule.

This southern kingdom, situated from nine to eleven degrees from the Equator, was formerly still less known than northern Abyssinia. When it recently became accessible, it was discovered that its inhabitants were still more barbarous than those of Amhara or Tigré, while the despotism there was more severe



and the priesthood more degraded than in these neighbouring provinces. For this very reason, however, Shoa presents the most valuable characteristics to the student of ethnography. It is here that the ancient Abyssinian character is preserved in unimpaired integrity, with all its peculiarities and good and evil qualities. Shoa was opened up by a German missionary, Dr. Krapf, and an English soldier, Captain Harris.

Ludwig Krapf was born at Derendingen, near Tübingen. His youth was one of hardship; but he possessed strong religious yearnings and a deeply spiritual inner life. He repaired to Basle for the purpose of being trained for a missionary, but he did not find there what he sought. Having studied theology at Tübingen, he became assistant pastor, and proved himself an earnest and faithful minister. Through the influence of the Swedish missionary Fjelstädt, he was won over to the missionary cause. Driven, together with his colleague Isenberg, out of Tigré, he turned his steps towards Shoa, where he found the way clear before him. He proved himself a truly heaven-sent boon for that southern province, as Samuel Gobat had been for Amhara. He was child-

like in his piety, glowing with zeal for his Master and love for the lost sheep, and at the same time he had received a learned education and was a linguist of a high order. A scholar, yet eminently practical, he was neither timid nor fastidious, as is usually the case with scholars; but bold, enterprising, and persevering under difficulties such as few have experienced. He gained the confidence of King Sahela Selassie, established a school, collected Ethiopic MSS. which he sent to Tübingen, disseminated the Bible in the dialect of the country, and held intercourse with the priests. Karafa, as the Africans called him, was respected and beloved, the king heard him gladly, presented him with a silver sword, and conferred upon him therewith the rank of a Governor. He would have conferred on him a vice-royalty (such as the German naturalist Dr. Schimper had received from Prince Oubea), but Dr. Krapf declined the office. The fairest hopes began to dawn, he meditated the spreading of the Gospel from Shoa to the interior of Africa.

It seemed as though the British Embassy under Captain Harris were destined to second Dr. Krapf in the execution of his plans. In 1842 that officer

received the interesting commission to appear as the first European Ambassador at that barbaric court. He was accompanied by Captain Graham, Dr. Kirk, Dr. Johann Roth the naturalist, and Bernatz the painter ; the two latter were from Munich. Two apothecaries, a carpenter, and fifteen English soldiers, who had volunteered for the expedition and were provided with cannon, completed the party. The procession, consisting of a hundred and twenty camels, traversed the desert, and reached the chief town of Ankober, where the foreigners, with their strange weapons and quick rounds of firing, called forth the astonishment of the dark-skinned multitude.

After long parley and many messages of ceremony, the embassy was admitted to the audience-chamber, the mud walls of which were adorned with rich silver-work. King Sahela Selassie received them reclining in a raised alcove, and surrounded by eunuchs, pages, and warriors. The letters from the English Government were presented in a costly casket, read aloud, and interpreted by Krapf. The presents to the king were displayed,—a carpet, which entirely covered the floor of the chamber, splendid Cashmere shawls, time-pieces,

musical-boxes playing "God save the Queen," and Chinese dancing figures, which excited universal merriment. Three hundred muskets, furnished with bayonets, were then piled. The king exclaimed in ecstasy, "God will surely requite you, for I cannot."

In order that the common people might also have something to see, and be impressed with sentiments of awe, a shooting-match was arranged in the valley, the target being fixed upon the distant face of a towering rock. The king sent by way of welcome to his children, as he graciously styled them, an enormous spiced pasty; and their visit was returned by the royal confessor, a dwarf, who made a speech to the following effect: "Forty years ago did Aspha Wusan, the grandfather of King Sahela Selassie, dream that red men would come and bring precious things from the lands beyond the sea. The astrologers confirmed this, saying that the strangers would come from Egypt. Our eyes are old, and yet have they seen new wonders. Under seven kings in Shoa have none such been beheld."

The embassy remained in the country for more than a year. Dr. Roth was busied with investiga-

tions in natural history. With his assistance, Harris prepared his work, "The Highlands of Ethiopia," an interesting book, poetical rather than scientific, yet free from misstatements. Bernatz contributed the illustrations, which were most successfully printed in colours, and the whole formed a veritable *livre de luxe*. It was dedicated to Queen Victoria.

On the anniversary of the Invention of the Cross, which festival falls in the spring, the king held his great annual review. He has a body-guard, but no standing army. In the event of war, and on occasion of the grand review, the reserve forces of the people are called up. Each viceroy is bound to provide a certain number of men; these bring with them their own horses, arms, and rations, and they serve without pay. The forces displayed at this review were by no means of despicable calibre. It is true that a few antiquated culverins seemed likely to prove of but slight service; the cavalry, however, ten thousand strong, were excellent. The officers were decked with trophies of the wild animals they had slain: the infantry were armed with shield, sword, and spear. Three thousand Galla warriors

belonged to this body. Their songs re-echoed like the roaring of lions. These Abyssinians are warlike as the children of Israel in the days of Barak and Deborah. In the martial exercises that were performed, heroic figures were to be distinguished, such as might have called to mind the champion-warriors of Homer. At nightfall bonfires were lighted by the Abyssinians in honour of St. Helena, who had employed this kind of signal to spread the news of her discovery of the Cross from Jerusalem to Constantinople—the most ancient form of telegraph, resorted to by Agamemnon himself when he caused beacon-fires to be lighted upon the mountains to convey to Argos in a single night the tidings that Ilion was taken. The festivities were crowned by the English letting off rockets in the midnight sky. The Galla declared that these “Gypzi” (Egyptians, the name given to all white men) were invincible, for they could bring down the very stars from heaven.

Those were merry scenes, to be followed by tragic ones hereafter. Shoa is bounded on the south and west by the country of the Galla; and between the two peoples war has raged from time immemorial.

It is the king's endeavour to keep the neighbouring tribes in a state of subjection; he exacts from them a tribute of cattle. Krapf has observed that they might live in peace if they would submit to this requisition; but they are a bold, liberty-loving race. If the tribute is left unpaid, the king undertakes a campaign against them. Harris and Krapf were both witnesses of one of these expeditions.

The invading army descended the mountains in a south-westerly direction, and in three divisions. The whole company numbered twenty thousand, but of these only a third part were combatants. Cooks and singing-women swelled the train. The king was attended by the priests bearing the Tabot of the Archangel Michael. The object of the campaign was kept secret. Down into the plains of the Galla poured the savage host. The inhabitants had fled; the crops were trampled down, the dwellings burnt. At length the lovely and picturesque Finfinni valley was surprised; village after village was given over to the flames. Then followed a horrible butchery; all the men were massacred and mutilated, all the women and girls dragged away prisoners, and 37,400 head of cattle driven off.

Sahela Selassie had already perpetrated eighty-four of these terrible raids.

One of the leaders of the Galla tribe had taken refuge in a tall tree. Sahela Selassie invited the English to shoot him down. They repudiated with indignation the idea of killing a defenceless foe. They offered instead to kill some elephants. (One elephant's carcase confers as much honour upon its slayer as the dead bodies of forty slaughtered men of the Galla tribe.) Whereupon the king himself shot the captain down from the tree, and mutilated him with his own hands; having done which, he proceeded to decorate himself with the trophy, the ostrich plumes upon his head. There was no soldier-like bravery in this kind of warfare; it consisted of nothing but hideous cruelty: and the excuse made by these degenerate Christians was that the Galla were heathens, whom they had a right to treat as the Israelites treated the Canaanites. Krapf recognised in the diabolical savagery of these nominal Christians the most serious obstacle to the spread of Christianity in the interior of Africa.

A second blot upon the realm of Shoa consists in the slave-trade.



It was a striking exception, a brilliant flash of success, when Krapf and Harris prevailed upon the king, after the raid just described, to let all the captive widows and fatherless maidens go free, and return to their own homes. The depths to which the king of Shoa had sunk were exemplified in the part he bore in the Mohammedan slave-trade. To be sure, no subject is allowed to sell slaves; but the king takes a toll from the Mohammedan slave-hunters, who convey their prey from the interior through his territories to Tadjurra; and this toll produces a yearly revenue of 8000 dollars. A slave-market was to be seen in the vicinity of Ankober; and Bernatz beheld with 'melancholy interest the noble stature of these unfortunate victims. The shame is all the greater, inasmuch as many Christians are to be found among the women and children, who are destined to fall into the power of Arabs and Turks. It was the chief object of the British embassy to put a stop to this iniquity. The first step to this end was to be the closing of the route through the Shoa territory to the slave-dealers (alas! it was only one road among many). Sahela Selassie did actually sign a treaty of fifteen articles

for the abolition of the slave-traffic, and he also, at the request of Harris, conferred freedom upon 4700 of his own slaves.

As formerly in northern Abyssinia princes related to the reigning house were kept in captivity, so Sahela Selassie held seven of his kinsmen in bondage. They were miserable-looking beings, loaded with chains: several of them had been deprived of their freedom for thirty years; they were employed in making harps and basket-work. The liberation of these unhappy creatures was also achieved by Harris and Krapf.

The British embassy thus awakened the fairest hopes among the friends of humanity and religion. Harris proposed to abolish the slave-trade in Abyssinia by means of a regularly-maintained connection with that country, by the establishment of other branches of commerce, and through the medium of a permanent representation of England at the court of Shoa. But all these promising plans came to nothing; the treaty was never carried out. Harris was recalled to London by the Tory party in consequence of a change of ministry, although he had even offered to remain in Abyssinia as permanent

Ambassador without a salary. The finest opportunity for the accomplishment of so noble a work was allowed to drop through.

Sahela Selassie was not destitute of good qualities. He was esteemed a just judge even by the Mohammedans, who were wont to say that he meted out his justice in nicely-balanced scales of gold. But he was ruined by polygamy; and this is the darkest blemish upon his character. Like Solomon in his degeneracy, like the Persian kings, like the Mohammedan rulers, he kept concubines, even to the number of three hundred. This unhappy state of things revealed the deep degradation of the clergy; for in spite of outward ecclesiastical pomp, they were powerless to arrest the evil. It was the same priesthood that denounced and expelled the evangelical missionary. Sahela Selassie knew not the time of his visitation. He had it in his power to become the mightiest and most popular ruler in Africa, had he but perceived his opportunity, and taken his part decisively for the interests of humanity and true Christianity.

Harris, with his companions, was obliged to withdraw, and Krapf's work was also cut short.

Krapf obtained the king's gracious leave of absence for the purpose of making a journey to Egypt, and he was furnished with an escort and letters of recommendation. He chose the northern route, but was overtaken by terrible misfortunes. He had to pass through the Galla territory; the chief, Adara Bille, received him with high apparent favour, but afterwards caused him to be treacherously robbed and taken prisoner, under pretence of a special revelation having ordained these proceedings. Krapf made his escape by night, and was now obliged to beg his way back throughout Abyssinia on foot, amidst unspeakable difficulties and dangers, through a land full of wild beasts and savage natives, over icy mountain-passes and burning plains. By little short of a miracle he at length reached Massowa.

He returned to Tadjurra in the hope of being able to resume his labours in Shoa. But the king forfeited his word, and denied him entrance into his dominions. Harris, who at that time was still at Ankober, made vain applications on his behalf. "My people will not have it," said the despot, who was otherwise not wont to consult the wishes of his subjects. It was the priests who, filled with jealousy

and enmity, had worked upon the king to the prejudice of Krapf. Another dangerous enemy was the intriguing Rocher de Héricourt, a swindler who had insinuated himself into the favour of Sahela Selassie. When Harris made a serious appeal, the king became furious. There was nothing further to be done. Krapf made one more attempt to regain a footing in northern Abyssinia. But at Adowa also he met with a repulse. He then turned his steps towards Mombas, on the east coast of Africa, south of the equator, in order to work among the heathen Wanika.

One fruit of his work in Shoa was the information which he obtained concerning the neighbouring peoples in the south and west, and which he embodied in his book entitled "Travels in East Africa." It is to him that we are indebted for tidings of the most southerly off-shoots of the Abyssinian Church, the miserable remnant of Christianity in the interior of Africa.

Gurague lies to the south of the river Hawash, and is a mountainous district enclosing the Lake Suai. The latter has five islands, which are inhabited by monks. It is said that ancient Ethiopian

MSS. are to be found there ; but as yet no European has penetrated into those regions, whilst 3000 slaves are annually brought from thence. The people of Gurague have no king, each village is independent, and they all wage war with each other ; their prisoners are given up to slavery. They are despised by the Abyssinians as a beggarly tribe ; but they nevertheless have a claim upon our sympathy.

Still more to the south lie two little Christian principalities, Kambat and Wolamo. Finally, about 4° north of the Equator, is the kingdom of Susa. Once every year a caravan travels thither from Abyssinia. These remotely-situated Christians have no bishop ; and it is related of them that they once sent to the Abuna Cyril of Gondar an envoy, bearing a dried skin, with the request that Cyril would fill the skin with his breath, so that they might blow with it upon their candidates for the priesthood, and thus ordain them. This was certainly a superstitious idea, yet one not to be ridiculed ; for it revealed, though in a singular manner, the legitimate desire to hold fast to a union and living association with their mother-Church.

Kaffa is a kingdom governed by a queen; a portion of its inhabitants are Christians. The king of Enarea is a Mohammedan. South of Enarea is Sendtshero, a kingdom containing twelve provinces. It is reputed to have been formerly a Christian state, but it is now replunged in heathenism. Human sacrifices are offered there; and the slave-dealers who come from those regions are in the habit of casting into a certain lake by which they have to pass the finest of their female captives, in order to propitiate fortune.

South of Susa dwells the Doko tribe, a race of dwarfs, four feet high, who roost in trees, and feed upon ants, snakes, and mice. A few of them have been carried off now and then to other parts as slaves. Herodotus of old seems to have heard of them, to judge from his story of the dwarf-race, or pigmies, fighting against the cranes.

The Galla are admitted to be the most powerful nation of East Africa. They call themselves the Orma, and are divided into five tribes, without a common chief. They are of the Caucasian type, with good mental endowments, as was proved by the Galla youths whose freedom was purchased by

Duke Maximilian of Bavaria. That prince freed them from Egyptian slavery, and brought them to Munich, where they were educated, and instructed in the truths of Christianity. Their teacher, Tutscheck, found them gifted, well behaved, and susceptible of every good impression. They were baptized; but they soon afterwards died of consumption, the almost inevitable fate of every African who is transferred to the comparatively rude climate of Germany.

The Galla celebrate their worship under trees; they pray to heaven (Wak); they believe in future rewards and punishments; and, in common with Christians, observe Sunday, calling it the great Sabbath. The English *savant*, Dr. Theodore Beke, considers the Galla to be degenerated Christians. Krapf had an especial affection for this people; he studied their language, and began to translate the Bible into that dialect. He compares them with the ancient German tribes, and he cherished the hope that, when they shall have accepted the Christian religion, they will become, with regard to Africa, what the ancient Germans became for Europe. After Krapf's original plan, of making



Abyssinia the medium for the introduction of light into the interior of Africa, had been thrice overthrown, he turned his attention to the south, in the hope of sending out the Gospel message from thence into the land of the Galla. He spent many years of indescribable trials, yet with untiring patience, among the heathen in Rabbai, in the neighbourhood in Mombas, and saw but little result from his work. It was his privilege, however, when returned to Europe in his old age, to learn that a Mission station had been founded among the Galla,\* a small beginning of a task of immeasurable extent. Who would not, in contemplating all these tribes, call to mind the words of our Lord in the Gospel: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth labourers into His harvest!"

We return from this digression to take up the thread of our narrative in the year 1843. This epoch was followed by a period of twenty-five years, in the course of which extraordinary events took place in Abyssinia. King Theodore came into power; the Evangelical Mission was resumed; the

\* Krapf's Leben, von Claus, p. 205-209.

king deteriorated into the most frightful of tyrants, and met with a tragical end.

Amhara was ruled by Ras Ali; Tigré by Oubea; Gobat had meanwhile become Bishop at Jerusalem. It was Ras Ali who invited the Bishop to assume the charge of the Abyssinian Convent at Jerusalem. This was a praise-worthy measure; but in his own dominions, Ras Ali was no better than other barbarous chieftains, and he was degraded by additional vices. Oubea was also a savage, tyrannical sovereign. His predilection for the French, for the brothers Abbadie, and the Jesuit Jacobis, shall not here be turned to his reproof, but rather his banishing of Isenberg and Krapf. Whence, now, came he who eventually overthrew both these rulers?

When Gobat lived at Gondar in 1830, we learn from his autobiography that an influential Abyssinian lady, Oizoro Waleta Teklit, sought his aid on behalf of her brother Hailu. This brother was a savage and a maniac, who had slain one of his own sisters. Gobat found him chained to his bed, while the Abyssinian priests were trying to drive the evil spirit out of him. Gobat remarked the blood-shot eyes, and pronouncing the patient to be not

possessed, proposed to bleed him. This was done. The sick man purposely sprinkled his blood upon the dirty white robes of the priests, whom he hated. After two copious bleedings he became calm, and his chains could safely be removed.

Hailu was viceroy of the western province of Kuara, which borders on the Arab territory; and he had at that time a son named Kasai, a lad of twelve years of age. The boy had learnt in the Convent of Tschankar to read Ethiopic, and Gobat presented him with a copy of the Gospels in Amharic. This gift stimulated Kasai to further study. He read the New Testament with delight, but for a long time nothing was heard of this youth. In years to come he was destined to develop into the Emperor Theodore. His mother is said to have been poor, and to have traded in kosso, a remedy against tape-worm; the Abyssinians take this medicine every month to protect themselves from the consequences of eating raw meat. This mother professed to be descended from the family of Solomon.

We should have been almost in the dark with regard to the adventurous career of Kasai, had it not been for the chronicle of an Abyssinian *savant*,

Saneb. This record was translated for us by Martin Flad.\* The author was King Theodore's secretary; it is obvious that he stood towards his master in the position of a one-sided admirer and flatterer; but his information is useful, notwithstanding.

Kasai, as a boy, escaped falling into the hands of the cruel Galla who attacked the convent-school, and hid himself in a wilderness. His first feat of arms was the slaying of two elephants. He then overcame seventy robbers, with the assistance of only twelve companions. He himself became a robber-chief, and even in early youth nourished largely-conceived plans. In this respect he resembles Garibaldi, who once practised the same craft in South America. The biographer ascribes extraordinary clemency to Kasai, in that he only cut off his prisoners' ears; he might in this respect have appealed to the example of Ulrich von Hütten.

Oizoro Mennin, the mother of Ras Ali, obtained for Kasai the province of Kuara. He there displayed his valour in conflict with his Mohammedan neighbours near Matammah. He was rewarded by receiving in marriage the hand of Ras Ali's daughter,

\* Flad, *Zwölf Jahre in Abyssinien*, S. 157 ff.

Towabetsh, a lady who, unlike her father, was noble-minded, and adorned with virtues. She proved to be the good genius of her husband.

As among savages reconciliations quickly alternate with hostilities, so the friendship with the house of Ras Ali was of no long duration. Kasai carried on war upon the waters of the Lake of Zana against the dependants of the old lady Mennin, and captured that august personage herself. He next made war upon his powerful father-in-law, conquered him in a sanguinary battle in 1854, and made him his prisoner also. He sent his defeated foes to the fortress of Sar Amba in the province of Tschelga. This was only the beginning of his successes, for he had a hard task before him. It happened about this time, as he was sitting at table with his companions in arms, that he consulted the oracle as to his future. He took a glass and dashed it upon a wooden trencher. The glass was to typify himself, the trencher his enemies. The trencher was split, the glass remained unbroken. He beheld in this circumstance the earnest of future victories, and exclaimed: "Who can withstand me, for I am a servant of Christ!" His companions were fired

with enthusiasm, and thenceforward believed all the more firmly in their leader's star. The next enterprise which he had set before him was the conquest of the mighty Oubea. Kasai had an ally in the brave John Bell, an Irishman who had devoted himself to lion-hunting on the banks of the Blue Nile, and who subsequently attached himself with ardour to the young aspirant. It was Mr. Bell who, previous to the battle, reconnoitred the enemy through his telescope. Kasai was thereby enabled to surprise Oubea, vanquish him, and take him prisoner. This took place on the 3d of February 1855, and two days later the conqueror caused himself to be crowned by the Abuna Salama in the church of St. Mary at Debra Essieh, as Negusa Negest, *i.e.*, King of kings, under the name of Theodore II. This name was connected with a prophecy. The Abyssinians believed that a Theodore was to be raised up to re-establish the ancient kingdom, to subdue the Turks, to destroy Mecca and Medina, and to liberate Jerusalem. Theodore turned this expectation to his own profit, and assumed a rôle similar to that so recently taken among the Moham-medans by the Mahdí.

This ascendancy of Theodore reminds one of the history of Chlodwig, who destroyed the various Franconian dukes, one after another, until he remained sole ruler, supported in his pretensions by the ecclesiastical power. Gregory of Tours did not scruple, after narrating the crimes and deeds of violence committed by Chlodwig, to add: "God was with him, for he walked in the ways of the Lord." In both cases may be perceived the same falsification of Christianity, the same mixture of orthodoxy and cruelty, the same unholy alliance as that which is to be met with among the Byzantine emperors, and among the Crusaders. We are justified in stigmatising as a hypocrite him who carries Christ upon his lips, and at the same time belies his profession by his acts. Yet we cannot accuse Theodore of intentional deception, and of using the name of Christ merely as a cloke. He believed in his mission, and, ill-instructed as he was, he thought he was serving the cause of Christ. The mania of a special divine mission generally proves fatal to him who is possessed by it. Such a delusion, so far from guiding him into the way of God's commandments, betrays him into the commission of lawless acts.

Theodore's confederate was the above-named Salama, the then representative of the ecclesiastical power. When Gobat arrived in Abyssinia, he found no Abuna there, and the vacancy of the episcopal see lasted seventeen years. At the expiration of this period, a new bishop was sent from Cairo to assume the charge, a Copt only twenty years of age. He had attended the school of the missionary Lieder, and knew some English. He was a little better instructed than the Abyssinians, and he consequently despised them, though he was not much superior to them. The evangelical missionaries could not trust him. When associating with Europeans he wanted to appear an educated man; but at the same time he was anxious not to compromise himself with the narrow-minded and ignorant Abyssinian priests.

To please the clergy, Theodore now banished Father Jacobis, and the Roman Catholic missionaries in general. The theological opponents of the Abuna were persecuted. The ecclesiastical world in Abyssinia was at that time split up by a controversy. One party of the priesthood held the doctrine of the threefold birth of Christ. The Lord was begotten



of the Father from all eternity, and in the fulness of time he became Man, and was born of the Virgin Mary; so far, all parties were justly agreed. But the party holding the threefold birth designated the descent of the Holy Ghost at the baptism in Jordan the *third* birth; a singular, but, it is to be hoped, not a criminal doctrine. The Abuna repudiated this curious mode of expression, and the king upheld him in doing so. But in what manner? The priests who refused to recant were flogged. In Shoa several had their hands hewn off for this cause, a punishment which resulted in their death; and Salama had the heartless cruelty to remark: "These men have died for nothing at all." These proceedings were dignified with the name of the restoration of Church unity; and after having had recourse to these odious measures, Theodore boasted: "We have now only one faith!" In reading the narrative of these events we seem to be transported back to the days when the Arian emperors at Constantinople had the tongues cut out of such as confessed the Divinity of Christ, and when the iconoclastic rulers practised similar cruelty upon the monks who painted pictures for the churches.

Theodore, as emperor, had two more martial enterprises to carry through. He subdued the Mohammedan Wollo-Galla, who had intruded themselves into the kingdom, and took from them the fortress of Magdala. Shoa was also conquered. Sahela Salassie was dead; Melekot, his son, died of fright; his youthful son, Menelek, submitted himself to Theodore, who spared him, and he is now reigning in Shoa. Thus, from the northern frontier to Gurague, every power became subject to the new ruler, and he stood upon the very pinnacle of his greatness.

The amount of that power has already been made clear in the course of the foregoing narrative. The Abyssinian king is judge and lord over life and death, irresponsible-wager of war, commander-in-chief, all in his own person. He disposes of landed property at his pleasure. The people render blind obedience. When Theodore began to develop as a tyrant, the poor Abyssinians said with stolid resignation: "Had we not been sinners, God would not have given us such a wicked king." The same mental attitude prevails there as formerly in Russia, where the clergy taught that whosoever dies by the

will of the Czar goes straight to heaven. Theodore made extensive use of his absolute power. He secularised the Church property, which constituted a third part of the land, and he organised a standing army. It is evident that a man in such a position has enormous capabilities, whether for good or for evil.

The tidings of Theodore's coronation could not fail to make a deep impression upon Gobat, and upon the banished missionaries. It was looked upon as a providential dispensation; one which would initiate better times for Abyssinia, and open the way for the introduction of scriptural Christianity. Gobat had a favourable opinion of Theodore. It was hoped that he would govern well, and extend a helping hand to the reformation of the Abyssinian Church on principles in accordance with the Word of God. Gobat wrote to him, and made an excellent choice in sending Krapf and Martin Flad to Abyssinia, where they arrived in April 1855. Theodore and the Abuna happened to be in Debra Tabor, engaged in the campaign against the Wollo-Galla. Salama spoke with enthusiasm respecting Theodore, and flatteringly towards the missionaries. Mr. Bell

met them as a friend. This man had become a thorough Abyssinian, and had married a native woman. His influence over the king was beneficial. He was sincerely devoted to Theodore, and slept at the door of the royal tent, like faithful Uriah of old before the tent of King David. Bell was one of the four *lika mankuas*, i.e. the valiant men who dress exactly like the king and expose themselves to his dangers, so that the enemy, in the tumult of the battle, cannot tell which is the real king.

The missionaries were introduced into the royal presence. The sable potentate was seated upon a carpet, barefooted and with uncovered head, according to the custom of that country. His eyes were fiery, and his expression crafty. His hair was plaited in three tails. His appearance was gloomy, but his words were friendly. Pleased with Gobat's missive, which the missionaries presented to him, he gave utterance to the wish that the Bishop would send him three artificers; a gun-maker, a builder of palaces, and a printer of books. Theodore set a high value upon European civilization, though he knew it but by hearsay; and he contemplated the introduction of it into his country as a means of

elevating his people. All matters of faith he desired to leave to the Abuna ; and neither this functionary nor the king objected to the proposal that the artisans, whom Gobat was to send, should teach and disseminate the Bible.

As in days of old the Roman Empire, during the first five years of Nero's reign, enjoyed comparatively good government, so it was in the present case. The period from 1855 to 1860 is to be regarded as the better days of Theodore's reign, and Martin Flad, who was an eye-witness of events at this time, gives a favourable account of the king's proceedings.

Personally, Theodore was in the highest degree brave ; a skilful horseman, and a good shot. It was his custom to dispense justice every morning, while in a fasting condition. His sentences were severe, but just ; the punishments were inflicted on the spot, and without respect of persons. Even ministers of state, if they had offended, were chastised with the great whip. He could not write, and therefore dictated his orders (he could, like Cæsar, keep several scribes employed at the same time), and special messengers hastened to bear his man-

dates to the places of their destination, even to the remotest quarters of the kingdom. Theodore helped the poor and the oppressed; he encouraged agriculture and trade, prohibited the slave-traffic, and abolished polygamy. He himself set a good example by living in lawful matrimony with Queen Towabetsch, and by receiving with her from time to time the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This queen possessed the power of influencing him by her gentleness of spirit, and of softening his anger. In matters of state he allowed himself to be guided by the counsels of his friend Bell, and of the English Consul Plowden. He was at that period in the habit of reading the Bible, and he also showed favour to the missionaries, protecting them against the attacks of the priests.

The work of the Mission prospered. The young men, whom Gobat had sent to the king, had been trained as evangelists in the institution at St. Chrischona, near Basle. The Bishop, in his far-sighted wisdom, had abstained from ordaining them; for as the king wished to avoid all schism in the Church, the missionaries were bound to withhold themselves from all clerical functions, which were

to be left entirely in the hands of the Abyssinian priesthood.

A Protestant congregation, therefore, was not to be formed; and the emissaries were to fulfil a mission similar to that of the Moravian Diaspora Brethren. The latter carry on a quiet work by visiting the friends of the Brotherhood; so-called Societies are formed, the members of which mutually edify one another, but at the same time remain in connection with the Evangelical Church of the land. It was had in contemplation to form a Diaspora of enlightened Christians in Abyssinia, such as would conduce to the spiritual welfare alike of clergy and laity. The missionaries were directed to labour at their respective trades, to render themselves useful, to earn their living, and at the same time to circulate the Bible, and to impart instruction to the young; truly a genuinely Christian enterprise.

The men, six in number, whom Gobat sent to the king, had a dwelling place allotted to them at Gaffat, on a hill in a beautiful neighbourhood. There they set up their work-shops, and found several hundred workmen at their disposal, among whom were some Galla prisoners of war. The

Europeans sought to being the truths of Christianity before the minds of their Abyssinian neighbours. They had permission to read the Bible publicly on Sundays in the Abyssinian churches, and to celebrate their own worship at Gaffat in the Amharic dialect. In addition to these privileges, the king granted to them a sphere of labour among the Falashas, with a view to the conversion of these sable Jews to Christianity. Martin Flad devoted himself to them, and found many of them simple-minded and receptive. In course of time sixty-five Falashas were baptized, and we have reason to believe that they became true Christians. These baptisms could only be solemnised by the Abyssinian priests.

The missionaries at first were held in high honour ; they were richly rewarded for every successful work achieved by them, were presented with the red-silk robe, and thereby made capable of appearing at court. In these early days, they fared only too well ; so that their father-like friend, Gobat, began to feel anxious lest they might fall into worldly-mindedness, and betray their higher vocation.

They executed works in wood and iron. The completion of the first carriage, which, with its team



of four mules, excited the admiration of the king, was an event. Road-making was a special industry of the workmen who were under the direction of the missionaries. They also manufactured weapons of warfare, with the co-operation of the French armourer, Bourgaud. Inexperienced in the art of ironfounding, they yet, with indescribable labour, succeeded in fashioning a large mortar. This manufacture of weapons, which the brethren were compelled by Theodore to carry on, has been turned to their reproach, and to the reproach of their Bishop also; even in the British Parliament, voices were raised in condemnation. It is certainly a pity that the Bishop did not plainly declare to the king from the very beginning: "My men will only help you to the implements of peace. If, however, you desire to possess instruments of murder, you must send for other people to make them for you." Of course, no one anticipated the use that Theodore would subsequently make of his weapons. On the contrary, advantageous results were expected to accrue to the good cause from compliance with the king's wishes in this matter. The artizans became thereby indispensable to him; and even after his degeneracy

had begun, he was induced to treat them well for a while. On the other hand, however, a disadvantage sprang from this concession; the missionaries became eventually obnoxious to the people, because they had furnished the tyrant with the means of strengthening his despotic power over his unhappy subjects.

How then was it that Theodore, after beginnings which seemed to promise a wise and benevolent reign, fell away, and finally ended as one of the most terrible tyrants known to history?

It must not be forgotten that he had grown up in the midst of a race inured to deeds of violence, and among all the horrors of civil war. He was undoubtedly possessed of grand capacities for governing; he also manifested noble traits of character, and gave occasional evidence of genuine fear of God. It may, however, be assumed that his spiritual condition had never reached the standard which Bishop Gobat, the warm-hearted friend of Abyssinia, had imagined.

The progressive development of Theodore's character is a warning example of how the possession of unlimited power infatuates its possessor, and ruins

his character. As the slave-owner, who can do what he likes with his property, becomes savage and inhuman, so is it with the despot. Because he stands above the civil law, he readily yields to the folly of supposing himself superior to the Divine law also, and of imagining that the moral precepts are not binding upon him as they are upon lowlier children of men.

Another snare for Theodore was that referred to in the Proverbs of Solomon, xxxi. 4, 5: "It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted." There is no wine in Abyssinia; for where the palm-tree begins to flourish, the grape-vine ceases to grow. But in its place is the fermented honey-wine (tetsch), and brandy is but too well known. Theodore became a slave to these pleasures, and thereby a slave to anger and a spirit of revenge.

To these causes were added misfortunes which accelerated his ruin; they consisted in the death of his best people. The good queen died; the faithful counsellors, Bell and Plowden, lost their lives in the civil war; presumptuous young men and intriguers

came into prominence at court; debauchery became the order of the day. The king no longer concerned himself about the Bible. Without diffidence or shame he appeared in public with two queens, and had concubines in addition. Thus did his government deteriorate. By means of excessive taxation, oppression, and robbery, his subjects were exhausted; the slave-trade was freely permitted, and a military despotism set up.

As Theodore was himself a usurper from the beginning, it is not astonishing, under such circumstances, that rebels and pretenders should rise up against him. One of these was Negusieh in Tigré. He was, however, conquered and captured, whereupon Theodore caused his hands and feet, and those of his brother, to be hewn off, and both these men were left to suffer a lingering death beneath the scorching rays of the tropical sun. The officers of Negusieh had fled to the asylum of Axum; for besides other ancient Israelitish ordinances, there exist "cities of refuge" in Abyssinia. The king promised free pardon to the fugitives; and then, as soon as they had quitted the place of safety, had them treacherously cut down. His confidential adviser, Bell, had

fallen while fighting against the rebel Gared ; Theodore ordered 700 prisoners to be slaughtered as a sacrifice for the dead. This was the commencement of his atrocities.

Theodore's appearance when he went forth to battle was of a most imposing character. Surrounded by warriors and priests, and accompanied by his four tamed lions, the monarch went into the field, and, like Raamses of Egypt, or Sennacherib king of Assyria, overran a doomed land with his wild and savage hosts.

Having attained the summit of his power, he desired to enter into relations with the great potentates of Europe. A new English Consul, Cameron, had recently arrived, and also a Frenchman named Bardel, a dangerous person. Theodore availed himself of the presence of these Europeans to send a letter to Queen Victoria, and another to Napoleon III., who, upon the victorious conclusion of the Crimean war, and after the Peace of Paris, was playing first violin in the European concert. The report that, after Prince Albert's death, Theodore had offered his hand to Queen Victoria, is a fable.

The English Government committed a great blunder, which has not been explained to this day. It vouchsafed no answer to the sable king of kings. Napoleon did not answer with his own hand, but replied to Theodore's missive through a Minister, exhorting him to maintain religious liberty; *i.e.* to receive into his dominions the Roman Catholic missionaries from France. He sent word to him verbally, however, that he did not wish for any friendship with a ruler who hacked off the hands and feet of his subjects. Thus was Theodore deeply offended in both quarters, English and French; and it is intelligible that from thenceforward he was filled with distrust of the Europeans. Under these circumstances, he fell out with the missionaries. He employed them, it is true, as heretofore; but he confined them to Gaffat. They were not allowed to quit their own allotted boundaries without leave, and they found themselves slaves in a mere gilded slavery.

The situation was rendered worse by the behaviour of the proselyte Heinrich Stern from Hesse. This man had been sent by the Jews' Mission Society in London to labour among the Falashas. He busied

himself with the conversion of the Jews, and with photography also. He insulted the king, by treating him on two occasions as a barbarian. He presented himself at an audience of the king in top-boots and carrying a revolver. He moreover sought the interview at an unseemly hour, after supper. When the king reprimanded him, he bit his own finger, heedless of the fact that in Abyssinia such a gesture signifies a declaration of vengeance. Theodore on the spot commanded one of Stern's servants to be flogged to death, and himself to be thrown into fetters. From that time forward the other missionaries and the rest of the Europeans were kept prisoners. Theodore had their papers examined by Bardel, because he opined that they circulated unfavourable reports of him in Europe. Stern had made it known that Theodore's mother was a dealer in kosso, and this was not to be forgiven by such a *parvenu* potentate. In November 1863 a great court of justice was held in the open air. Threats of death were uttered, but not carried out; for the thought was still paramount with Theodore that these Europeans were indispensable to him. The unhappy condition of the prisoners, among

whom were Cameron, and afterwards Bardel, lasted from that date for two years and a half, with sundry vicissitudes. They were transferred from place to place; several of them were tortured, and again treated with mildness. The sword was constantly dangling over their heads, and the king played with his unfortunate victims like a cat with a mouse. It was in vain that Bishop Gobat addressed to the king, through the medium of Theodore Beke, serious and touching remonstrances on behalf of the Europeans in their perilous position. (Nov. 28, 1865.) \*

At length the English Government awoke out of sleep, and sought to make up for past deficiencies. On the 28th of January 1866, an English embassy arrived in the camp of the king. At the head of it was Rassam, an Armenian, who had received an English education, and had served in the East as a British Consul; he was accompanied by Lieutenant Prideaux and Dr. Blanc. They were the bearers of rich presents, and of an autograph letter from Queen Victoria, in which she requested the liberation of the captives. The first impression was exceedingly favourable. Theodore felt himself flattered and

\* Sam. Gobat's Biography, pp. 335 and 340.



exalted. He gave orders that Mr. Rassam should receive royal honours; the Abyssinians were commanded to bow themselves before him with their faces to the earth. He conceded the liberation of the prisoners, and everyone joyfully prepared for departure.

Hereupon followed a mysterious fluctuation of affairs. The travelling party were, like Joseph's brethren, suddenly arrested on the way, and brought back. Once more a court of justice was held, with great pomp, in the open air. The Europeans were led forth in chains; they begged pardon of the king for everything wherein they had offended him. And now a most singular incident took place; the king himself fell upon his face, and begged pardon of the accused for Christ's sake. It was supposed that everything was right again, when the unfortunates were once more taken captive, and treated with greater severity than before.

Here we have a psychological puzzle. Supposing that scene to have been mere acting, what end, we may ask, did Theodore propose to himself in playing it out? It is much more probable that he was really subject to such sudden changes of temper.

The state of his soul was subject to unaccountable fits. Flad has compared him with King Saul; and really there are points of resemblance in the two life-histories. Saul likewise made a good beginning; but afterwards grew presumptuous and self-willed, gloomy and cruel. He threw his javelin at David, and caused the priests of Nob to be slain because they had sheltered the object of his hatred; and yet, when David had spared him in the cave, he wept, and said, "My son, thou art more righteous than I." In like manner, Theodore was now and then overmastered by a dark mood, and again, during brief intervals, would come to a better mind. In the meantime, the irrational proceedings of the king, who, contrary to the law of nations, had cast Rassam into chains, were not without a motive, which can be guessed at with tolerable certainty. Bardel, who afterwards betrayed an attempt at flight on the part of the prisoners, was the instigator. It seems that it was he who aroused a suspicion in the mind of the king that the English were in league with his enemies, the Egyptians; and that they wanted to spy out his land, and eventually bring him into subjection. He believed that they had an under-

standing with the rebels who here and there rose up against him. It is a fact that the line of English policy had, by its amicable attitude towards the Turks, given serious offence for generations past to the Christians of the East; but in the present case the political suspicion whereby Theodore allowed himself to be embittered, had no foundation whatever. The British Government was entirely indifferent to the affairs of Abyssinia. Theodore, in his infatuation, thought that the captive Europeans would serve him as hostages, and that he would possess in their persons a pledge for the good behaviour of the English and French Governments. So far from this being the case, his capture and detention of these Europeans were the very causes which led to his ruin.

At this critical juncture, Martin Flad, whom Theodore esteemed above the other Europeans, undertook a useful and honourable commission. The king despatched him, on the 21st of April 1866, with a letter to Queen Victoria, to negotiate for peace, and at the same time to petition for the sending out of engineers, tools, and machines to Abyssinia.

The absence of this ambassador, and the anxious suspense suffered by the prisoners, lasted for a whole year, and this was the most terrible time of the captivity. In the northern and central parts of the kingdom defection set in apace. In Tigré there arose a second Kasai; in Lasta the standard of rebellion was unfurled by the pretender Gobazieh. Like Richard III., when the storm gathered above his head, Theodore was hurried on from one act of cruelty to another. The state of things at this epoch is recorded in a most touching manner in the diary of Frau Pauline Flad, who with her children remained behind in captivity, while her husband made the journey to England. The Europeans were incarcerated for a time at Debra Tabor, among thieves and murderers; after which the king took them with him to the fortress of Magdala, where the final act of the tragedy was destined to be played out.

On the 15th of November 1866, Theodore beheld horsemen and chariots of war contending in the midnight sky. We find the record of a similar remarkable apparition, as a portent of approaching war, in the second book of the Maccabees, the fifth

chapter; and something of the same nature was observed in our own days in Westphalia, previous to the war of 1866. These are things which we cannot explain, and which remind us of the proverb, "Coming events cast their shadow before them." Theodore took this view of the circumstance; he grew uneasy, and let fall certain hints, as though he wished to atone for his wild, unbridled life. But the passionate love of arbitrary power, the resolution to maintain his supremacy at any price, outweighed all other feelings, and carried him to the highest pitch of vindictiveness and blind, all-destroying rage. No cruelty was too terrible for him to resort to, in order to inspire his political enemies and his wavering dependants with dread. All who attempted to desert from his army were either burnt alive, or condemned to die by starvation. Country people whose fidelity seemed to him dubious were burnt in their huts, together with their children, aged people, cripples, and expectant mothers. He cut the throats of deserters; and if any happened to have escaped, he had their wives, children, and servants murdered. The hacking off hands and feet was quite a common occurrence. The soldiers

sentenced to starvation, and of these there were 293 in one day, were pinioned down with wooden forks; and several of the victims languished for ten days ere death released them.

These deeds of vengeance grew into senseless acts of destruction. Rebels had risen up in Gondar; and although the priests had appealed to the king for help against the insurgents, he not only punished the guilty, but ordered the town and the churches to be plundered and set on fire. The requisitions also, with which he visited the provinces that had remained faithful to him, took the form of predatory expeditions; and for no conceivable reason he had a million head of cattle slaughtered and thrown to the hyenas.

The king now began to employ these terrorist measures in close proximity to the captive missionaries themselves. One of their friends, a certain Debtera Sahela, to whom Frau Flad had entrusted the care of some money, was taken prisoner on groundless suspicion, and condemned; his hands and feet were hewn off, and he endured torture and death with the resignation of a true Christian. Five servants employed by the missionaries were killed;

the missionaries themselves had to work in chains, fashioning stone balls for the mortars of the king. Brandeis and Steiger had to make a journey on foot, while having their hands bound with fetters to their knees.

The head-quarters of these scenes were at the king's camp in Debra Tabor. When the surrounding district was thoroughly ransacked, it was forsaken, in October 1867, for the province of Gaint; and when this region was devastated, Theodore led his army of 50,000 persons, of whom, however, only 10,000 were combatants, to Magdala. In point of fact, by this time his dominion only reached from the territory about the Zana Lake to Magdala. The northern portions of his kingdom were in open rebellion. He purposed to concentrate his forces in the mountain fortress. To this end a road had to be made in haste for the transport of cannon; for it was necessary to traverse the deep ravines formed by the course of the rivers Djidda and Bashilo. Four hundred men were harnessed together to draw the great mortar "Sebastopol," weighing fourteen thousand pounds.

Martin Flad was presented as Theodore's ambas-

sador to Queen Victoria at Osborne, and received from her a written answer, which he sent on in advance. On the 2d of May 1867, he himself arrived once more at the court of the Abyssinian king, who was astonished at the courage and fidelity of his emissary.

The Queen's letter sorely piqued its recipient. She had adopted a very serious tone, complained of the breach of international law, and demanded for every European who wished to leave Abyssinia safe conduct to the frontier. The desired machines, to the value of £4000, and the engineers, were on the way, and arrived in due course at Massowa; but Colonel Merewether had orders to detain them there until the above demands had been complied with.

Flad represented to the king the serious state of the case. The Queen was still willing to preserve friendly relations on condition of the liberation of the prisoners. Otherwise, war was inevitable. An English army would arrive from India, and he must expect to see France and Egypt ranged on the side of his adversaries. Theodore insisted upon his original conviction that the English had been his



enemies from the outset. "I place my reliance upon God; the justice of my cause shall be decided upon the battle-field." He believed Abyssinia, with its natural defences, and especially with its mountain fortress of Magdala, to be impregnable.

In October 1867, an Anglo-Indian army, under Sir Robert Napier, was set in motion. It was embarked at Bombay, and landed in Annesley Bay, south of Massowa, near Zula, and not far from the ruins of Adulis. A mole had first to be constructed to facilitate disembarkation, and a railway from the coast to the foot of the mountain was improvised.

There were 12,000 fighting-men, one-third of whom were European, two-thirds Indian troops; the camp-followers numbered 8000 persons. Forty tame elephants were provided to carry the cannon; each animal was capable of bearing a burden of twelve hundredweight. Thirty-five thousand other beasts of burden were elsewhere procured to assist in the transport. As in Abyssinia the most popular coin is the Maria Theresa dollar, millions of these were struck at Vienna, expressly for this campaign.

This remarkable expedition was elucidated in the "Illustrated London News" for 1868 by copious and admirable engravings. Gerhard Rohlfs and Lieutenant Stumm, who accompanied the staff by virtue of recommendations from the Prussian Government, have described the course of events. A certain Mr. A. F. Shepherd was correspondent for the "Times of India;" and his account\* is rich in vivid descriptions of what he himself witnessed. Rassam and Stern have also recorded their adventures. But the most valuable report is contained in Sir Robert's own despatches, communicated by Shepherd, relating to the taking of Magdala.

The first step in the undertaking was particularly dangerous, and consisted in surmounting the well-known boundary-mountains to gain the high table-land. Six days were employed in the ascent, before Takonda, the Abyssinian plateau, was reached. The camp was pitched upon the plain of Senafe; it was as if a warlike people had migrated to this distant unknown region. The successful result of this first movement was due to an admirable guide,

\* The Campaign in Abyssinia. Bombay, 1868.

Werner Munzinger, who was at that time English and French consul at Massowa. - Without his co-operation, success would have been very difficult of attainment; but he was not adequately rewarded for his services. Lewis Krapf accompanied the army as interpreter. The English officers esteemed him very highly; and he returned to Abyssinia in princely guise, attended by an honourable escort along the self-same route that he had once traversed, in 1842, as a fugitive and a beggar. He fell dangerously ill, however, and had to be sent back. This was his last visit to Africa.

It was there, at the entrance to his kingdom, that Theodore ought to have received the enemy. Had the mountain-passes been properly defended, it is probable that no Englishman could have penetrated into the interior of the country. But the king had no longer any authority in these northern regions. His power had fallen into complete decay.

In order to reach Magdala, the army had now a journey of 200 geographical miles to accomplish through a strange land which offered the most stupendous natural difficulties. The army transport

carried rations sufficient for six months. Both Shohos and Abyssinians willingly supplied all that was required in addition to this provision, in return for ample remuneration. Whilst passing through deep ravines, and over mountain-passes 10,000 feet above the level of the sea, great care was to be taken to cover the return route. Defences had to be constructed and armed, garrisons to be left in possession, and it was an essential matter to secure a good understanding with the chiefs who had divided the recreant provinces among themselves.

The most important of these chiefs was the pretender in Tigré, a second Kasai. To this man Sir Robert paid especial attention. They went forth to meet each other; and Sir Robert, in order to make an imposing appearance in the eyes of the Abyssinians, rode, like Hannibal of old on his march into Italy, upon an elephant. This was an unusual spectacle for the people, for in that region none but wild elephants are to be found. Presents were exchanged, and Napier took part in a review of Kasai's stately troops, 4000 strong.

The young officers chose to be discontented with Sir Robert's slow mode of progression; but so it

often happens. Those who are so eager to rush into battle do not consider what a heavy responsibility lies upon the commander-in-chief. They met with countless natural obstacles, but encountered no enemy. When they captured spies sent out by Theodore, they allowed them to take a survey of everything, and then sent them home, that they might impress their king, who had as yet no conception of a European army, with the story of what they had seen.

And so the march progressed, past Adigrat and Antalo, onward to the table-land of Talanta. From thence a view is obtained of the fortress of Magdala, and far into the southern region of the Wollo-Galla. Immediately beneath the plateau, at a depth of 3000 feet, was the ravine traversed by the river Bashilo. The fortress is planted upon a formation of basalt possessing an area of two English square miles; the basaltic columns average 200 feet in height. Water is to be had at this high level; tillage is also carried on; the magazines were well stored with arms and provisions. This fortress is to Abyssinia what the Königstein is to Saxony. Magdala has two out-works, the heights of Fala and Selassie, and upon

them were planted Theodore's cannon, so that everything was in good defensive order. A bombardment without crossing the river-bed was hardly possible, on account of the distance.

Theodore, who now for the first time caught sight of his formidable enemy through his telescope, was in a singularly uncertain mood. On the approach of the English, he had allowed Rassam to be set at liberty, and, as a measure of prudence, treated him with flattering consideration. To Flad he remarked with a kind of resignation: "I suppose you and I shall see London in company;" as though he had made up his mind to captivity. On Maundy Thursday of 1868, however, immediately before the outbreak of the conflict, he perpetrated one of his most barbarous deeds. He had in his keeping 300 Abyssinian prisoners, one of whom offended him by the threat that the English would come and set them all free. Thereupon the king ordered them to be killed and thrown over the rocks; some, indeed, were thrown over alive, and these were fired upon. The English descried from a distance an enormous heap of black human bodies, above which were circling vultures and ravens.

The descent into the valley was successfully achieved, and Sir Robert prepared for a cautious, regularly conducted siege. But a rash and daring officer, Colonel Phayre, contravened his plans, and became, so to speak, the hero of the day. Dissatisfied with the prudent proceedings of the General, he complained to Rohlfs that Sir Robert was afraid, and that he would like to break loose from him, and seize King Theodore with his own hands. Instead, therefore, of properly discharging his duties as Quarter-Master General, he skirmished with a few cavalry soldiers at the foot of the rock, and succeeded in luring the enemy forth. It was on Good Friday, according to our computation, at half-past four, that the first cannon-ball was fired. The firing lasted an hour, and the Abyssinians showed themselves no despicable marksmen. Then followed a twofold sortie. Out from both gates of the fortress poured the combatants; they were seen crowding down the sides of the rock like a swarm of black ants. They had been told that the English were unarmed, and they expected to gain an easy victory by their impetuosity and superior numbers. Hosts of women followed in their track, bearing

baskets in which to collect the booty. But these poor natives were badly armed with old-fashioned match-locks, and a thunder-shower rendered these utterly useless. They met with a terrible reception. The one column was overwhelmed with rockets, the other with grape-shot. The result was such as might have been expected; the Abyssinians fell in crowds. Panic terror seized upon the survivors, and in wild disorder they sought to regain the fortress. No one knows the number of the killed and wounded who strewed the sides of the mountain. The English sustained no loss of life in this battle, and their wounded numbered only twenty-five. "The General of the Queen of England is stronger than I," admitted Theodore to his friends. Then picking up an exploded rocket, he said to the Europeans, "Why did you not bring me these things?"

On Easter Eve he sent Flad, Lieutenant Prideaux, and an Abyssinian, his own son-in-law, to negotiate a truce. To the latter the English showed their heavy ordnance, with the remark that as yet they had only used their toys. In the letter addressed by Sir Robert to Theodore, and entrusted to the ambassadors, occur the following words: "Your



Majesty has fought like a brave man. In the Queen's name I demand the surrender of every European, and also that your Majesty surrender yourself to me; while, on my part, I guarantee to yourself and your family honourable treatment." The three emissaries returned to Theodore with this letter, which is still in the possession of Flad. The hour of greatest danger to the prisoners had now arrived; yet Flad and Prideaux kept their word and returned to the lion's den. Theodore had resolved not to give himself up. A sense of honour and a feeling of distrust no doubt conduced to this determination; on the one side soldierly pride, on the other the fear lest he might fare as those had done who had trusted to his own plighted word.

He had previously threatened to cut his captives into a hundred thousand pieces, and it would only have cost him a word for this menace to be carried into execution. One of his relatives presented himself before him, and, drawing his sword, exclaimed: "Upon the English yonder we cannot revenge ourselves, but these are in our power." "These people," replied Theodore, "have done nothing amiss; let them go." Truly a wondrous fit of generosity! The

Abyssinians themselves were amazed at this change of temper, for they had already given the Europeans up for lost. But among these prisoners were noble Christian men and women and innocent children. Who would not acknowledge in their release the Hand of Providence, and the answer to those prayers which they had sent up to Heaven during the days and nights of their anguish ?

Several of the released captives repaired at once, on Easter Eve, to the English camp; the rest followed on Easter Day, the 12th of April, and were received with acclamations. Including women and children, their number amounted to fifty-nine persons, English, Germans, and French.

The memory of this joyful event is clouded by an unfortunate occurrence, which has not been fully cleared up to this day. The first batch of prisoners had been set at large. Before Theodore gave orders on Easter Eve for the liberation of the remaining European prisoners, he sent to the English General a herd of a thousand head of cattle as a present. Sir Robert already had Mr. Rassam at hand, and he consulted him as to the propriety of accepting this gift. Rassam was in favour of his doing so; he

and the Abyssinian dragoman, Samuel, pointed out to the General that in case of his refusal the captives still in Theodore's power would be undone. Rassam omitted to inform the General that, according to Oriental usage, the accepting of such a present would be tantamount to a treaty of peace. Sir Robert, according to Shepherd's account, observed a prudent silence. When Flad, Samuel, and several others returned to the king, his Majesty enquired of the interpreter whether the General had accepted the cows. Samuel, bowing himself to the earth, replied: "They are accepted, and he begs to signify to your Majesty his thanks." "If I have his friendship," was Theodore's prompt response, "what more can I desire? You may depart."

In the meantime it became clear to Sir Robert that Theodore would try to evade the fulfilment of the other demand; namely, the surrender of himself and his family. Theodore, in all good faith, believed the peace to be now fully concluded. The General, who was bound to abide by his instructions, which were to the effect that he must entirely subdue the hostile potentate, discovered when too late the fatal trap into which he had fallen. He addressed the

severest reproaches to Rassam for not having explained to him the full significance attaching to the acceptance of the cattle. It appears that he himself merely regarded it as the overture to a truce, which could be revoked again, and to preliminaries of peace, which could be broken off when necessary. Be this as it may, he gave an order at the out-posts to send the cattle back again; and Theodore justly interpreted this act as a renewed declaration of war. He had sent away his hostages, and he therefore cursed Rassam and the others who had deceived him, challenging his adversaries to reckon with him in another world, at the bar of God's justice. He would have resumed hostilities that same night, but the majority of his officers refused to second him. Faith in the invincibility of the sovereign had been shattered, and now disloyalty began to invade the ranks of his army. Before day-break Theodore, with about five-and-twenty still faithful adherents, quitted Magdala, intending to fly southwards, either to the hostile territory of the Galla, or into the desert. In a few hours, however, he returned. He had resolved to die in his own fortress. Next morning he appeared once more in an attitude of

defiance before the walls, and fired off a few shots.

It was Easter Monday. Both the out-works were already occupied by the English, and Theodore's own cannon were pointed against his fortress. Sir Robert sat upon a high rock and superintended the bombardment, which was carried out upon scientific principles. It no longer met with any opposition, and did but little damage. The infantry, preceded by the pioneers, marched up the steep and rugged ascent: at the gate of the fortress there was one brief struggle, then the palisades were scaled. The king defended himself, supported by the remnant of his faithful ones; these consisted of seven officers and nine private soldiers; seven of these valiant men fell at his side. He retired from the fray, and shot himself through the mouth with a revolver which Queen Victoria had once presented to him. The English pouring in, found him lying dead, dressed in a well-worn soldier's garb.

The stronghold was given up to plunder, and placed at the mercy of the inrushing army. The Indian troops, Mohammedans and heathens, made terrible havoc. The town, full of booty strewn in

all directions, resembled a vast frippery-shop. Even the graves were ransacked, and the body of the recently deceased Abuna Salama thrown about. The fruits of pillage were, according to English law, common property; they were therefore delivered up, and afterwards divided in camp. The golden crown of Theodore and other valuables, together with a number of Ethiopic MSS., were sent to London.

On Tuesday in Easter week the remains of the king were interred by the English within the precincts of the church amid salvoes of musketry.

Thus was Theodore, even in his death, like King Saul. Like him, he preferred to die rather than to fall into the hands of his enemies. Heroic up to the very last moment, he made a tragic ending, urged on to his death by despair. "I believed," so he is reported to have said,—“I believed that God was with me; but Satan led me astray to deeds of cruelty.” He was a man of kingly qualities, grand after the type of ancient heroes. After fair beginnings, he ended in a state of mind similar to the Cæsarian madness of the Roman tyrants of old. It was said of the terrible Emperor Septimus Severus,

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that tyrant of African birth—said in the Roman Senate after his death—that he ought either never to have been born, or never to have died;—never to have been born, if one reflects upon his crimes and upon the mischief that he wrought; never to have died, if one contemplates the good and great things which he might have done for his country, and which, indeed, he began to do at the outset of his career.

The last scene of the tragedy was speedily consummated. On the 16th of April Magdala was set on fire, and even Theodore's grave was consumed by the flames. Sir Robert left the ruins in the possession of a Mohammedan princess of the Galla tribe. Then commenced the retreat of the soldiers, the camp-followers, and the inhabitants of Magdala. Vast processions of ragged and hungry beings poured westwards. Rohlf accompanied them, and was a witness of the unspeakable misery suffered upon this journey; human corpses and carcasses of animals strewed the line of route. The Abyssinians of highest rank were conducted northwards by the English as prisoners of war, under the surveillance of Dr. Schimper. Among these was the old legitimate emperor, whose dignity was but a name, and the two

queens. One of them, the rightful wife of Theodore and the daughter of Oubea, died of grief on the way. The crown-prince, Alamaju, only eight years old, was taken to England, where he received an English education, and where also he died, three years ago, without having ever revisited his native land. Two other sons of Theodore are still living in Abyssinia.

Sir Robert hastened to march back by the same route as that by which he had reached Magdala, for the season of violent tropical rains was approaching. As a finale, a grand review of the troops was held on the Queen's birthday in the plains of Senafeh, and by the end of May the whole army had re-embarked. In the course of the retrograde march, the English were met by the priests and the inhabitants of Watela, who came to greet them, and to thank God for their emancipation from the rule of the tyrant, who had frightfully afflicted their district. The priests sang in their ancient Ethiopian dialect the triumph-song of Moses after the overthrow of Pharaoh. A hope of better times had dawned upon their bruised and bleeding hearts.

This Abyssinian campaign is one of the most remarkable events of modern history, and may be



compared with Hannibal's passage of the Alps. It exemplifies the vast capabilities of English gold, English bravery, and the inventions of our modern times. The costs are estimated at ten million pounds sterling; it resulted, so far as England's glory is concerned, in a complete success. Sir Robert received the title of Lord Napier of Magdala; Colonel Phayre fell into disfavour; and Rassam was dismissed from the English service.

The joy of the Abyssinians over their emancipation from the tyrant's yoke was but of short duration; for the English did nothing further for that unhappy people. How easy would it then have been to inaugurate a better government supported by a resident English Envoy; to establish a regular communication with the sea and thereby with Europe, to conclude a treaty of commerce, and to secure freedom of action to the Evangelical Mission! But Sir Robert and the British Ministry left Abyssinia to her fate. The missionaries themselves were withdrawn, although many Abyssinians wished them to remain. As on the occasion of Harris's recall from Shoa, so, after the downfall of Theodore, was the opportunity of conferring a great and lasting benefit upon

Abyssinia, and also upon the adjacent parts of Africa, neglected by the English Government. It is true that annexation was not contemplated; but it is also true that no philanthropic aim had a place in the counsels of the conquerors. The real object of this vast undertaking was no secret; the prestige of British rule in India must be maintained. Therein lay the motive power which resulted in this vast enterprise. If the Mohammedans of India had seen an Oriental potentate allowed to bid defiance to the English Government by refusing to give up the prisoners, and to go unpunished for the outrage, a fresh rebellion like that of 1857 would have been imminent.

After the retirement of the British troops, Abyssinia relapsed into a condition of disunion and anarchy worse than that which had prevailed when Theodore first appeared upon the scene. Seven chiefs contested the crown. That Kasai of Tigré who went out to meet Sir Robert as the latter was retiring from Magdala, and who fawningly offered him his good wishes, was presented by the British General with a battery and 800 guns as a reward for having kept quiet in the rear of the English

army throughout the campaign. He it was who subsequently advanced successful pretensions as Theodore's heir, and who, after subduing his rivals, caused himself to be crowned at Axum on the 21st of January 1872, under the name and title of King John II. This person is the present sovereign of Abyssinia.

The rule of John II. has not been undisturbed. Egypt has proved itself a dangerous neighbour. This country enlarged its boundaries under Mehemid Ali and his successors. Following the line of the White Nile, the Egyptians have, in the course of the last sixty years, subdued the territories which extend to the great equatorial lakes, while in another direction they have occupied the coasts of the Arabian and Indian seas. Abyssinia has consequently become hemmed in by a Mohammedan power, and in the years 1875 and 1876 an outbreak of war took place. Munzinger unfortunately played, under the Egyptian viceroy Ismail, a mischievous part. He himself had become a mighty Egyptian vicegerent; and, being hostile to King John, he encouraged the Khedive in his plan of conquering Abyssinia. Rohlf's goes so far as to accuse him—wrongfully, it

is to be hoped—of aspiring to the attainment of the sovereignty of Abyssinia in his own person. In two campaigns, however, namely in the Valley of Gudda-guddi and near Gura, the Egyptians were vanquished by King John. All the prisoners of war were mutilated and slaughtered. Munzinger himself lost his life in a skirmish against the Galla, who were in alliance with the Abyssinians.

At length, in 1879, John also overcame Menelek of Shoa, whom he spared and caused to be crowned king of that province. He had thus united under his sceptre the whole of Abyssinia from the northern frontier to Gurague, and could compare himself with the Emperor William, who had performed a similar achievement in Germany. He wrote a letter to the imperial veteran, and received an answer, accompanied with presents, by the hand of Gerhard Rohlfs, whose book \* gives the most recent description of matters in that country.

John II., like a true Oriental despot, boasts of having forced a hundred thousand Galla, from sixty to seventy thousand Mohammedans, and thirty thousand heathen Kumants, to receive Christian

\* *Meine Mission in Abyssinien*, 1881.

baptism. In the northern and central parts of Abyssinia there are at present no evangelical missionaries stationed; in Shoa, however, the missionaries Mayer and Greiner are employed in instructing those compulsory neophytes in the doctrines of the Christian religion.

One ray of brightness is afforded by the Swedish enterprise set on foot near Massowa, where a hundred and fifty Abyssinian children are being taught by missionaries, to whom General Charles Gordon has given a piece of land. But these Swedes enjoy no European protection, and are now, it seems, in an embarrassed position. Gobat and Krapf, Abyssinia's truest friends, are gone to their rest. Martin Flad, who, for good reasons, declined the post of lieutenant-governor which was offered to him by the Khedive, is now living in Koruthal, where he labours as a missionary to the Jews, at the same time keeping up a connection with his spiritual children, the baptized Falashas of Habesh.

The question now presents itself: what is to be hoped from this new Abyssinian king, for his country and his people? It is difficult to express any opinion on the subject; for the reports which have

reached Europe concerning King John are conflicting. According to some representations, he possesses no intellectual or moral superiority over the ordinary run of Abyssinian rulers. On the other hand, an admirer of this man has come forward, who pronounces him an -"almost perfect man." This advocate is the German traveller in Africa, Dr. Anton Stecker, who resided until 1883 in the vicinity of Emperor John. He imagines himself to have discovered in him the same heroic qualities as those which distinguished Theodore, coupled with similar esteem for European civilization, but with this difference: unlike King Theodore, his successor possesses a genuine love for righteousness, self-discipline, and humanity. Dr. Stecker has published this portrait of the Abyssinian monarch in the *Kölnischen Zeitung*, and has commended him in enthusiastic terms to the sympathy and support of the European powers.

Let us waive the discussion of individual character, for at the present moment it has no decisive significance. One thing is incontestable: namely, that the people of Abyssinia have the highest claim upon the attention and the sympathy of the Christian

nations of Europe. This sympathy she has always merited, but she deserves it in richer measure, now that she has been forced to the front by the course of events, after having so long occupied an obscure and despised position.

In speaking of the course of events, we refer in particular to the posture assumed by the Mahdi, or Muhdi, in Kordofan, and to the far-reaching flame of newly-awakened Mohammedan fanaticism. The prodigious significance of this fact must now become apparent to even the most infatuated and the most careless. Supposing that the fiercely-kindling fire of warlike enthusiasm should spread beyond the Red Sea and overrun Arabia, the greatest danger would accrue to the British rule in India, to say nothing of the outbreaks which are threatening in Egypt and Syria. For years past has the Hungarian, Vambéry, been drawing attention to the revolutionary ferment going on among the Mohammedans in the Punjab. In presence of this danger even the peace-loving Gladstone Ministry found itself forced into the sanguinary conflict of Suakim, for it seemed essential at all costs to keep Arab sedition away from the coast of the Red Sea, and to cut off all

connection between that country and India, if only it is possible to do so.

Then followed General Gordon's mission to the Soudan, and his heroic efforts, without the assistance of a European force, to settle the affairs of the disturbed province, and to put a stop to the Mahdi's progress. It was in vain that Dr. Gerard Rohlfs, whose judgment in Abyssinian affairs is of the greatest weight, pleaded for sending help to General Gordon by way of Abyssinia. The disaster of Khartoum and the lamentable fate of so great and good a man as Charles Gordon (January 20, 1885) filled the hearts of all Christian people with awe and sorrow. At present (March 1885) the eyes of the world are fixed with anxiety upon the critical position of Lord Wolseley and his army. England does not shrink from the gigantic attempt to force a route from Suakim to Berber through deserts and in the midst of hostile tribes. Under these circumstances it is impossible not to see the importance of the Abyssinian power as the natural ally of England. Sending Admiral Hewett to John II. was a wise measure; but as yet little is known of the results of his mission.



The strengthening of Abyssinia for the struggle into which it will inevitably be drawn, will remain a duty as much of prudence as of humanity.

It appears as though a decisive hour had arrived for that country. Is it again to fall a prey to the sad fate which overtook it 350 years ago, when it was devastated from the South by the savage Mohammedan Granje? One of the first steps of the Mahdi was to endeavour to put himself on a favourable footing with his powerful neighbour John. He received in return the following characteristic answer:—

“May this letter of John, the chosen of the Lord, the King of Zion, the King of kings of Ethiopia, reach the hands of him who is a prophet among the Moslems. Thanks to the God of Saints, and to the intercession of our dear Lady of Zion, we, that is I and my army, find ourselves in good health. Praised be the Grace of the Most Highest. How fares it with thee? Thou hast written to me: ‘I am a great prophet; I will seek no strife with thee; may peace reign between us.’ I know not whether it lies in the will of God that we make

war upon each other. Yet what follows thence? Do we not war with each other in our hearts? I am a Christian and thou a Moslem. Where I am, there canst not thou be. There, where thou art, can I not live in peace.

*"Written in the Camp of Michael Debra."*

The whole Abyssinian nation is thoroughly imbued with the resolution to withstand the old, hereditary, Mohammedan foe; and an army of 200,000 warriors, such as John II. can bring into the field, is not to be despised. Now that the power of the false prophet has swelled to such dimensions, an outbreak of the conflict seems unavoidable. Towards the West, Abyssinia possesses no natural frontier; and this circumstance would render all the more dangerous any attack in this direction from the Soudan. It also renders more indispensable a substantial support on the part of England, in order to uphold Abyssinia as an abiding bulwark against Islam. Nor is this all. If light is to penetrate into the interior of the dark Southern Continent, if humanity and Christianity are to find a way into the heart of Africa, this can only come to

pass if Abyssinia, the sole remaining Christian kingdom in the East, be sustained and strengthened through the establishment of a well-ordered form of government, through a regular connection with Europe (for which the possession of Massowa is indispensable), and through the introduction of a pure system of education, mental and spiritual.

## *POSTSCRIPT.*

THE latest accounts from Abyssinia are very distressing to the friends of that unhappy country. According to the agreement between Admiral Hewett and King John II., the king was expected to move westward and to rescue the Egyptian garrison of Kassala; whereas, in reality, he only devastated the lowlands between his own western border and Kassala, and rendered the position of the garrison more critical than it was before. He was allowed to take possession of the northern provinces of Bogos, Mensa, and Habab, which had been a subject of dispute between himself and the Egyptian Government. In those countries too, his proceedings resulted only in plunder and destruction. In his own territory his governors and generals are said to use as much violence as their predecessors did in the worst days of old, previous to Theodore's reign.

Thus King John seems to have disappointed the hopes of England, and proved himself as barbarous as the average of Abyssinian rulers have been. Although the negotiations which passed between the British and Italian Governments are as yet involved in mystery, nobody can be surprised to find that England has handed over the important place of Massowa to the Italians, and not to the Abyssinians.

H. W. J. T.

*April, 1885.*

THE END.

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